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LOST IN SPACE

"DANGER,
WILL ROBINSON!"

RAY BRADBURY'S
WONDERFUL ICE
CREAM SUIT
"SPECIES 2"

PLUS: LOST IN SPACE—THE SERIES

Volume 29 Number 12



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VOLUME 29 NUMBER 12

"The Magazine with a Sense of Wonder"

APRIL 1998

Now that bulldozers are plowing away in Playa Vista, I thought I would finally respond to James Van Hise's letter in issue # 29:6/7. Van Hise took me to task for my review of *THE LOST WORLD* (issue #29:2), which parenthetically noted that the film's ecology message was hypocritical coming from Steven Spielberg, whose DreamWorks company "is planning to pave over a large area of wetlands in Playa Vista..." Van Hise points out that DreamWorks will locate their facility on an existing site, that the actual paving is part of a commercial development at some distance from the studio, and he insists that the two have nothing to do with each other.

Well, I knew that construction of the DreamWorks facility would take place on an area that had already been paved over. However, it is misleading to believe that the further development in Playa Vista—which involves more paving—is a separate issue. Actually, the studio is part of a 5-million square-foot development plan that will build shops, homes, and offices. True, the development is being done not by DreamWorks but by the current owners, who want to sell the studio site to the film company. But during the planning stages, DreamWorks played hard to get, which resulted in a massive effort to lure them into making the purchase. Spielberg's partner Jeffrey Katzenberg even made a statement to the effect that DreamWorks was not a developer; in other words, before they purchased the site, the area would have to be developed for them. So yes, it may be true, as Van Hise states, that "DreamWorks are not themselves directly threatening the wetlands," but are they any less responsible just because it is being done for them? Their anticipated work force creates a need for the houses, shops, and restaurants being built—enough to accommodate 30,000 new residents and another 20,000 commuters each day. The environmental impact of this is open to debate (many pro-environment groups support the plan); it is a mistake, however, to believe that the development is an irrelevant coincidence.

Steve Biodrowski



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A NEW HARDCOVER

EAGERLY AWAITED

UNTITLED (DreamWorks)

Annette Bening, Robert Downey, Jr., Aidan Quinn, and Stephen Rea star in this untitled Neil Jordan film, co-written by Jordan and Bruce Robinson. The so-called "psychological thriller" follows Claire Cooper (Bening), a woman whose dreams are portents of real-life nightmares. Psychically connected to the mind of a madman, Claire is haunted by the twisted visions of a killer (Downey), who seems obsessed with her. Coming to her in her dreams, the killer gradually begins to close in on Claire's waking life, irrevocably drawing her into a dark vortex of insanity and murder.

Fall



EDEN (Legacy) March 27 (N.Y. & LA.)

Since screening at the Sundance festival (and gaining a favorable review in *Daily Variety*) in January 1996, this film has sat on the shelf over a year, awaiting distribution (an earlier announced date of January 31 was pushed back to March). Fortunately, the result is worth the wait. Joanna Going (PHANTOMS) plays a beautiful '60s housewife in this subdued art house effort, written and directed by Howard Goldberg. She has the wisdom, education, and enthusiasm to make a great college professor, but two things stand in her way: her husband won't hear of it, and she is physically challenged by multiple sclerosis. Oppressed both physically and mentally by her situation, she finds a unique avenue of escape: astral projection. The whole thing is presented in a metaphoric rather than literal manner, but the effect is quite intriguing, and the beautiful Going does a credible job of proving she's a real actress, not just a pretty face. Dylan Walsh and Sean Patrick Flanery co-star. SEE PAGE 12.

BABY GENIUSES (WB) April 10

Directed and written by Bob Clark (BLACK CHRISTMAS), from a story by producer Steven Paul, this film is based on the premise that all babies are born with the ability to speak to each other. What adults hear as baby-talk is actually sophisticated conversation. But when babies reach two years old and begin to speak adult language, they forget their secret language. Dr. Elena Kinder (Kathleen Turner), a scheming ambitious woman, heads BABYCO, the world's largest corporation manufacturing products for babies. What the public does not know is that she also funds a secret research lab, together with Dr. Heap (Christopher Lloyd), devoted to deciphering this baby language, in the hopes that the discovery will lead to profit and power. But when Sly, the best and brightest of these baby geniuses (pictured), escapes from the secret lab into the outside world, Drs. Kinder and Heap have to get him back before he blows the lid off of their secret forever. Sly organizes the babies in the outside world to invade the secret lab in order to foil Dr Kinder's plans. Also starring Kim Cattrall, Peter MacNicol, and Dom DeLuise.



THE BUTCHER BOY (WB) Spring

Without notice, Warner Bros abandoned their plan to give this Neil Jordan film a brief, limited run at the end of last year to qualify for Academy Awards. One hopes that doesn't mean they have decided not to release it at all. Eamonn Owens plays a small boy in an Irish town who retreats into the fragmented comic-book world of his dreams in order to escape the harsh realities of his real life. Stephen Rea co-stars, and Sinead O'Connor shows up as a foul-mouthed Virgin Mary.

EATERS OF THE DEAD (Touchstone) March 27

Antonio Banderas, Diane Venora (WOLFEN), and Omar Sharif star in this adaptation of the novel by Michael Crichton. John McTiernan (PREDATOR) directs, from a screenplay by William Wisher and Warren Lewis; McTiernan also produced the film, along with Crichton and Ned Dowd. The period piece follows an emissary (Banderas) abducted by a band of Viking warriors and forced to join their quest to defend an outpost at the end of the world from mysterious creatures legendary for consuming everything in their path.

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Upcoming cinefantastique at a glance, along with a word or two for the discriminating viewer.

compiled by Jay Stevenson
(unless otherwise noted)



GENERAL CHAOS: UNCENSORED ANIMATION (Manga) April (exclusive)

After its debut in New York last February, this anthology of adult animation reached Los Angeles in March and moves into San Francisco in April, with other dates to follow. If you enjoyed *Spike and Mike's Festival of Sick and Twisted Animation*, you'll be right at home with this rival compilation. REVIEWED ON PAGE 58

LOST IN SPACE (New Line) April 3

"Danger, Will Robinson!" That's right, Irwin Allen's campy '60s sci-fi show is now a big screen movie event, starring William Hurt, Mimi Rogers, and Gary Oldman. Stephen Hopkins directs, from a script by Akiva Goldman. SEE PAGE 14.

NIGHT WATCH (Dimension) March 20

THE SUSPENSE IS KILLING US!! Will this film finally come out, or will it once more be pushed back, so that we have to keep listing it again, and again, and again—as we have been since issue #28:4/5, way back in November of 1996? Please, let it end here! Oh god, if only the film turns out to be half as suspenseful...

WIDE AWAKE (Miramax) March 27

Writer-director M. Night Shyamalan fashioned this borderland genre effort, about a fifth grader (newcomer Joseph Cross) who begins searching for God after the death of his grandfather (Robert Loggia). Denis Leary, Dana Delany, and Rosie O'Donnell costar. REVIEWED ON PAGE 60. Mike Lyons

BACK TO SCHOOL

APT PUPIL (TriStar-Phoenix)

It was just too good to last: 1997 actually elapsed without a single theatrical film adapted from the work of Stephen King. Oh well, maybe the sabbatical will result in increased quality on APT PUPIL. Working from a script by Brandon Boyce, Bryan Singer (THE USUAL SUSPECTS) directs this second stab at filming the King novella (a previous attempt was never completed). Although not actually a horror piece, the story is certainly grim enough: sixteen-year-old high school student Todd Bowden (Brad Renfro) has uncovered a deadly secret: far from suspicion, Nazi war criminal Kurt Dussander (Ian McKellen) has been quietly living in Todd's hometown. Fascinated with the atrocities Dussander committed during the war, Todd begins to blackmail him. In exchange for the teenager's silence, Dussander must reveal his evil past. Bruce Davison (WILLARD) and Elias Koteas (CRASH) co-star.

Spring



HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC

ALIENATED AGAIN

H.R. Giger was surprised to find his name missing from ALIEN IV.

by Dan Scapperotti

Just hours after 20th Century-Fox sneaked ALIEN RESURRECTION in a suburban New Jersey theatre the internet was abuzz: the credits failed to include the name of H.R. Giger! The designer who had created the unique look of the outer space villain in ALIEN was, again, ignored by the studio. One German publication noted that the credits included 600 names with only one known omission. Mr. Giger, not one to sit back and take a slight, fired off a letter to the studio on November 13th, with a follow-up a month later. Pointing to his Oscar for ALIEN, Giger noted that all four Alien films used his "unique and personal style" and that for ALIEN 3 20th Century-Fox assigned him the incorrect credit "Original Alien Design" instead of the "Alien 3 Creature Design" designation stipulated in his contract.



ALIEN RESURRECTION revives Giger's monster designs from ALIEN, but the Swiss surrealist's name was omitted from the credits by 20th Century-Fox.

"In 1976 I had completed two paintings, 'Necronom IV' and 'Necronom V,' in which two long-headed creatures appeared," said Giger. "In 1977 these paintings were published in my book, *Necronomicon*, in German. It was this version of the book that Ridley Scott, in his search for a credible Alien creature, came across and saw these two paintings and decided on them for the full-grown Alien, using the words 'That's it!' The statement has been graciously repeated by Ridley Scott in almost every interview about his work on ALIEN." Experts believe that Fox is in for a big settlement once the dust settles, since it appears that the studio failed to secure the rights to the original works depicted in the books.

The designer also notes that "The creatures in ALIEN:RESURRECTION are even closer to my original Alien designs than the ones which appear in ALIENS and ALIENS 3. The film also resurrects my original designs for the other stages of the creature's life-cycle, the Eggs, the Facehugger, and the Chestburster. ALIEN: RESURRECTION is an excellent film. What would it look like without my Alien

life-forms? In all likelihood, all the sequels to ALIEN would not even exist! The design and my credit have been stolen from me, since I alone have designed the Alien. So why does not Fox give me the credit I rightfully earned?"

Good question. What gives with Hollywood? From all indications, the movie Mecca is the most cut-throat town in the country where it's not whether you're right or wrong but who has the sleaziest lawyer. □

STEPHEN KING ON THE EDGE

by Steven LeCroix

When people think of Stephen King, CARRIE, SALEM'S LOT, and THE SHINING come to mind. What about "The Last Rung on the Ladder"? Doesn't ring a bell? Well, it's a nine-page short story tucked between "The Children of the Corn" and "The Man Who Loved Flowers" in the anthology *Night Shift*, and it happens to be Edge Productions' latest film project.

You've probably never heard of Edge Productions, either, because the independent company, based in Maine, was started only three years ago by Frank Welch and Lucas Knight. How did these two beginners get the deal to film THE LAST RUN ON THE LADDER?

"We sent Stephen King a letter, along with another movie we did, called FROSTBITE, and asked if we could film the short story," said Frank Welch. In one month's time, Edge Productions received the go ahead. There were a few stipulations; for example, King does not want his name above the title (i.e., "Stephen King's THE LAST RUN ON THE LADDER").

"Right now, Frank is working on the script," said director Lucas Knight. "And we're looking to start shooting the movie some time in the spring. It was really Frank's idea to do this movie. The reason he picked this was because it was a fairly simple story with straight drama, and it'd be real simple to shoot. It is not a traditional Stephen
continued on next page

Production Starts



PHANTASM IV

Director-producer-writer Don Coscarelli promised to turn his cult hit of 1979 into a trilogy—but a tetralogy? Oh well, here comes another DTV sequel, with Michael Baldwin, Reggie Bannister and Angus Scrimm back in their familiar roles.

PLANET ICE

Fresh off the success of their debut animation feature, Don Bluth's historical-music epic ANASTASIA, Fox Animation launches a science-fiction effort, ICE PLANET. This time out, Art Vietello directs, from a script by Ben Edlund and Randall McCormick. Matt Damon, Bill Pullman, Drew Barrymore, Nathan Lane, Hank Azaria, and Lena Olin provide voices.

Short Notes

Since MEN IN BLACK has proved that funny sci-fi is big boxoffice, Hollywood Pictures division has purchased the rights to the novel *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, which began life as a BBC radio series. Author Douglas Adams will co-write the script with director Jay Roach (AUSTIN POWERS). ☺ Stephen Somers (DEEP RISING) will write and direct Universal's off-again-on-again remake of the 1932 Boris Karloff classic, THE MUMMY. Brendan Fraser (GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE) is expected to play the romantic lead. ☺ DreamWorks will distribute CHICKEN RUN, the debut feature from the Academy Award-winning English company, Aardman Animations. The film, about a group of chickens making a break for freedom before they can be fried, is being directed by Nick Park (Wallace and Gromit) and Peter Lord (ADAM). ☺ Alfonso Cuarón (A LITTLE PRINCESS) has been hired to direct the \$20-million live-action remake of SPEED RACER. ☺ The remake of I AM LEGEND, which would have teamed director Ridley Scott and star Arnold Schwarzenegger has been put on hold due to the projected \$108-million budget. □

GODZILLA ON THE NET

Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin try to keep their monster under wraps.

by Steve Ryfle

Fans monitoring the developments of TriStar-Centropolis' GODZILLA via the Internet were abuzz during Thanksgiving weekend last year, after an anonymous source leaked two drawings purporting to reveal the top-secret design of the Americanized version of the monster. The drawings, supposedly artwork for merchandising items, showed a creature decidedly more like a huge iguana than the bulky behemoth from Japan, leading old-school zillaphiles to fear that the new Godzilla would resemble their favorite kaiju not at all. Fortunately, the furor turned out to be a false alarm: the photos were revealed to be fakes planted by Centropolis in order to find leaks in their own security. Still, the incident showcased the efforts of filmmakers Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin to keep their mega-movie under wraps.

The ID4 duo won't say anything about the story, other than that Godzilla attacks New York—a fact they could hardly conceal, since most of the film was shot there last summer. They won't reveal much about the special effects, except that the monster will be created with a combination of CGI, men in suits, and "motion-capture," a process whereby the movements of an actor wearing an electrode-covered body suit are used digitally to animate the monster. Last, but certainly not least, the filmmakers have kept quiet about the new Godzilla.

Rumors were that Godzilla would walk on all fours, that he would change size and shape in the film, that he would pursue actress Jennifer Aniston through New York like King Kong chasing Fay Wray, that he would not emit his famous radioactive breath, and that he would have laser beam eyes (this last was fueled by an early promo film shown to merchandisers, which showed the lights of the Manhattan skyline blinking out as Godzilla's footfalls approached, followed by live laser lights and smoke effects in the theatre). Devlin created a special spot on the Centropolis website to nip this mis-



Godzilla's new, more reptilian eye peers into the camera at the end of the second trailer—one of the few glimpses fans have been granted of the new behemoth.

information in the bud. Of course, he said, Godzilla will walk on two legs. No, Godzilla will not "morph." Yes, there will be a "breath thing." Godzilla will not have a King Kong-type relationship with Aniston, who isn't even in the movie. And "if you see one laser beam shoot out of Godzilla's eyes...you can mail us your ticket stub, and Roland and I will come over to your house and bake you a key lime pie."

Centropolis eventually launched www.godzilla.com in June, creating a chat-room where fans can hash out the rumors amongst themselves. The website has all the bells and whistles to keep G-fanatics fixed on the May 20 release date, but it has little information about the film itself, except for cast, credits, and character names. The website is just one aspect of a publicity campaign that already includes two teaser trailers and one TV commercial that reveal brief glimpses of the monster's appearance. In the first trailer, a T-rex style foot crashes through a museum; in the second, the beast's double rows of dorsal fins raise a column of water offshore, and his crocodile-like eye peers into the camera. In the commercial, shown on New Year's Eve, Godzilla's tale knocks the famous glittering ball onto the revelers in Times Square.

Despite the secrecy, copies of a

surreptitiously photocopied script began exchanging hands at conventions last summer. Centropolis would not comment on its legitimacy, but if it is the real deal, the new Godzilla is not a mutated dinosaur but an iguana lizard irradiated by French nuclear testing in Polynesia. The monster finds its way to the Big Apple, where it nests, and the story follows the efforts of the military and a scientist (Matthew Broderick) to eradicate Godzilla and to find its eggs before they hatch. Meanwhile, a mysterious French secret service agent (Jean Reno) is also tracking the beast, trying to right the wrongs perpetrated by his country's nuclear tests. □

Obituaries

by Jay Stevenson

Tom Cranham

The 63-year-old motion-picture illustrator, who contributed to the special effects of such science-fiction efforts as STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE (1979), BLADE RUNNER (1982) and JURASSIC PARK (1993), died on November 19 of cancer. He began his career working on such Irwin Allen productions as LOST IN SPACE, LAND OF THE GIANTS, and CITY BENEATH THE SEA. His other genre credits include BATTLESTAR GALLACTICA, NEVER SAY NEVER AGAIN (1983), and GHOST (1990).

Anton Szandor LeVey

The showbiz Satanist (whose real name was Anthony Levy) died on October 29 of pulmonary edema, at the age of 67. Although he shot to fame (or infamy, depending on your point of view) for founding the Church of Satan in 1966, his real goal often seemed to be courting Hollywood. Amongst his friends and/or disciples, he counted horror filmmakers Gene Fowler, Jr. (I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF and I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE) and Robert Fuest (THE ABOMINABLE DR PHIBES, DR PHIBES RISES AGAIN), and Roman Polanski even gave him a cameo as the Devil in ROSEMARY'S BABY. He also claimed to have been a "consultant" on the Phibes films; although he receives no credit, several details are suggestive: the mad doctor's first name is "Anton;" he plays an organ (LeVey was a professional organist before founding Satanism); and he conducts a group of clockwork musicians (something LeVey claimed to have installed in his home). □

Edge Productions

continued from previous page/ King horror story. It is a drama, about how things can take a turn for the worse for a young girl who was blessed with the miracle of life after a tragic fall. The story has all the right King elements, along with a good dose of suspense." Knight added, "Since it is such a short story, the film will run about thirty to forty minutes. We hope to have a budget of \$60,000. That would be our dream. Right now, we're still looking for the barn to film it in. We want this to be a gut-wrenching story, and I think it'll be real good, if it's done right."

As a short subject, the film will have little hope of receiving traditional theatrical distribution. "I don't know what's going to happen to it, really," said Knight. "What we're mainly doing with this is bringing it to the film festivals, because that's where all the scouts and distributors go to find new talent." □

TARZAN, JUNGLE WARRIOR

Trooper Casper Van Dien on filling the ape man's loincloth.

In the box-office conflict between romance and action, Warner Bros. has definitively chosen which side to favor. In a move to court the ticket-buying teenage boy, their upcoming revival of TARZAN, previously known as TARZAN AND JANE, has been retitled TARZAN, JUNGLE WARRIOR. So, guys, rest assured you'll get all the thrills and excitement you're shelling out for, with little of that mushy stuff to get in the way.

Casper Van Dien (STARSHIP TROOPERS) certainly knew what he was taking on when he signed up for the role of Tarzan: "I'd get up at two-thirty in the morning, work out from three to five, then shoot the fourteen-hour day. And I had to do my own stunts, because I was naked. I ran up a wall—I ran ten feet up a slightly slanted wall—and jumped down and smashed somebody's head, and did my own flips.

"None of my stunt doubles would work out. They got flabby, and I had to do most of my own stunts, because they just wouldn't look right. There's one thing you can't hide: the human body. If they weren't cut-up, I was really cut-up. We had fourteen hour days in Africa, six days a week."

The story-line—directed by Carl Schenkel, and co-starring Jane March (as *the Jane*)—has Lord Greystoke returning to 1912 Africa to battle mercenaries threatening the environment and the people of his homeland—it is in no way a return to the good ol,' grammatically-

challenged ape-man of yore. In fact, Tarzan, in keeping with recent portrayals, is here less ape and decidedly more man. "I don't do any of the early Tarzan, where he's just ape," Van Dien explained. "It's after he's been in society; he's about to get married, and he goes back to the jungle to try to help out a tribe and save his homeland, where he grew up. He goes back because these people are stealing from the land, killing animals, and destroying a tribe that I was friends with. I go back down there to fight.

"I tried to stick close to the way Edgar Rice Burroughs wrote *Tarzan*, which is as an intelligent man," Van Dien continued. "A lot of the [movie] Tarzans were big, strong, and tough, but Edgar Rice Burroughs wrote a character who was big, was really strong, and was *smart*. Probably the most important part was that [Burroughs] tried to prove the survival of the fittest: we are the fittest because we have the brain capacity to learn and to really excel. We're strong *and* smart. The way he wrote it, Tarzan learned to mimic the animal sounds, and when the French soldiers came he learned to speak French, and then learned English from one of the soldiers. He went to America, because that's where Jane was originally from, and then he went back to Africa and learned some African dialects and Arabic, and then he went back to France. So he wasn't an Englishman, but he was

**BY DAN
PERSONS**



Casper Van Dien (seen above in STARSHIP TROOPERS) will next appear in TARZAN JUNGLE WARRIOR, which was actually filmed before TROOPERS.

worldly by the time he was twenty-five. He had already done all this; this is after he had been in society for five years, post-Greystoke."

Van Dien himself acquired a certain amount of worldliness in his preparation for the role: "I don't know if you ever read any Edgar Rice Burroughs. There are twenty-four and a half books, and they're finishing up the other half-book. I read the books; I did all the research—that's the most important part: the mental aspect of any character. I went to the Edgar Rice Burroughs estate in Tarzana—a whole city named after Tarzan—and I met the grand-son; I bought videos on Africa; I learned Zulu while I was over there—I can speak a little Zulu now—I studied ape movement and everything."

Sounds like more effort than an actor would need for such a role—one is left wondering how much Zulu Johnny Weismuller knew by the time he surrendered custody of Cheetah. But then, throwing

himself into a role seems to be a Van Dien trademark.

Van Dien himself readily admits, with no little pride, that his zeal frequently left his TARZAN co-workers somewhat dumfounded: "I just got off playing Tarzan. I ran around naked—well, I had a loin-cloth on—for three and a half months, and it was the coldest it's been in South Africa in sixty-five years... I think it's weird: my two stunt doubles in Africa refused to work out. Like, 'There's no way I'm getting up at two-thirty in the morning.' I couldn't blame them, but I mean...I was always like, 'I'll pick you up, c'mon.' I always wanted somebody to work out with, but nobody would come out that early.

"I did everything I possibly could, both [on TROOPERS and TARZAN]. On both of these films I worked my tail off. I don't have any regrets over how hard I worked or how dedicated I was to excel. All I did was watch videos on stuff and study everything and learn, and I have no regrets. I had fun." □

SPECIES 2

The male of the species makes his bow in the sequel to the sci-fit horror hit.

By Dan Scapperotti

Justin Lazard is having a hard time on the set of *SPECIES II*. He is spending the day either wrapped in a Calvin Klein robe or cavorting in bed with a pair of starry-eyed Washington debutantes. Minutes before, he was crouching over a screaming Raquel Gardner with a tentacle-laced rig attached to his back being operated off camera by an effects crew from XFX, Inc. Starring as astronaut Patrick Ross, Lazard has just returned from a mission to Mars, and he's beginning to feel unexpected side effects from his voyage.

Although he has starred in two TV series (*CENTRAL PARK WEST* and *EXTREME*), this is only the New York actor's second big-screen appearance (after Paul Morrissey's *SPIKE OF BENSONHURST*). "My character has a heroic return to the United States," he said, sitting in his trailer between scenes. "He has to re-assimilate into civilization with this slightly altered state, which is totally unknown to him and which causes him to have an almost schizophrenic side to his personality, similar to the one in



Above: astronaut Patrick Ross (Justin Lazard) demonstrates the side effects of his trip to Mars. Left: Lazard and the first film's Nastasha Henstridge.



MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE. He doesn't really know what's going on. So there is a real internal struggle happening within the character."

The bedeviled Ross goes through various stages of metamorphosis during the film, requiring extensive makeup effects. "I've heard horror stories of people sweating in plastic suits and/or spending hours in a makeup chair," said Lazard, "but I've been pretty fortunate, because Steve Johnson and the team of special effects people created a couple of different dummies of me for different situations. My character goes through major physical changes, most

of which are being done with appendages and tentacles which are placed on my body, but the dummies carry most of the burden. There are dummy miniatures as well as a full-blown eight-foot dummy with an actor inside who makes it moves. One is used in this scene with this girl I'm having sex with her and her sister. As a matter of fact, upon finishing the act one of them goes into the bathroom and proceeds to swell into a state of pregnancy. Within 30 seconds, she's completely pregnant and her stomach bursts open giving birth to an alien species. Meanwhile, the other girl is in the act, to put it mildly, and tentacles and things begin emerging from my back and nipples and every other orifice of my body and start wrapping around this other girl."

The makeup comes with the territory and must be endured; it is the dramatic moments for which what an actor lives. "The special effects scenes are challenging in their own right," he said, "but there's also the emotional scenes involving my girlfriend and my father which are much more dramatic in the traditional sense. There's this dueling thing because there's

Patrick, the astronaut, an all-American kid, and then there's this alien species within him who's trying to mate and start its own race—survive, basically. It is a bad monster, but it's instinctively justified. Like all animals, it wants to reproduce. My character has a lot of tension with his father who is a bit distant and set in his ways and doesn't listen to his son who's crying for help. So there's a real struggle as this thing inside him fights for control and he goes to his father for help and is sort of stonewalled. There are some pretty intense scenes with the girlfriend too. Horrible things happen in that relationship.



“The challenge is to accurately portray someone who is unaware of a transformation that is happening inside of him. He feels the symptoms of it, but doesn’t understand it. I’ve had to play a bit confused, as well as dealing with the loss and realization that the character finally comes to. He goes from sort of picture-perfect to realizing that he has this dark, vengeful force inside him that’s doing horrible things. Of course, when he realizes this, it’s devastating. It’s been a pretty challenging role, emotionally.”

Scrambling around a Martian landscape, impregnating debutantes and battling a female alien isn’t conducive to a deep character study. “It’s a lot of fun,” said Lazard. “It’s sort of a high-spirited atmosphere. I think that the nature of a sci-fi-horror movie is one where people try not to get too heady or too broody about anything. We’re basically creating entertainment, so generally the rule is: if you’re having fun in the creation of it the end product will be fun to watch for an audience.” □



Above: after returning from Mars, Ross (Lazard) is a celebrity pop hero, courted by groupies (in this case Linda Brooks), but his close encounters turn ghastly when he mutates into an alien. Top of page: special mechanical effects by Steve Johnson’s XFX company portray the transformation (the sex and tentacles combo is reminiscent of Japanese anime).



THE WON

Clothes make

*By Judd Hollander
& Sue Feinberg*

Whoever came up with the saying "clothes make the man" was righter than they knew, as author Ray Bradbury proved in his comically poignant tale "The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit," which is coming to the screen nearly 40 years after it was first written. It is the story of six impoverished Mexican-Americans who become entranced with the purest whitest suit they have even seen, thinking it will make all their dreams come true. Bringing the tale to life are Joe Mantegna (HOUSE OF GAMES); Edward James Olmos, (STAND AND DELIVER); Gregory Sierra (BARNEY MILLER); Esai Morales, (LA BAMBABA) and newcomer Clifton Gonzalez Gonzalez(REPLACEMENT KILLERS). Also featured are veteran actor Sid Caesar as the tailor who, along with Howard Morris, sells the group the suit. (Caesar and Morris co-starred on the landmark TV series YOUR SHOW OF SHOWS.) Rounding out the cast are actress-comedienne Liz Torres, Mike Moroff, and Lisa Vidal.

As Bradbury described the plot: "They collect their money, buy one suit, and move into a tenement room and live with [it]. Each of them get to wear the suit one night a week. On the seventh night they flip a coin to see who gets the suit." However, things don't go as they planned, and before the film is over, each person will find out just how important that suit is in the scheme of things. The film will be released by Disney's Buena Vista Division; it is the first Disney original live-action feature made expressly for the home video market.

Bradbury got the idea for the story from his boyhood experiences in the 1930s. "Until I was 18 or 19, I was wearing my brothers and my fathers' clothes," he recalled. When he graduated from Los Angeles High School, he wore a suit that his uncle had been wearing when he was killed in a holdup. "My family was on government relief when I graduated. What else [could I do] but wear the suit, bullet holes and all?...With the first money I earned, I went and bought some clothes for myself." In 1944 he lived for a time in a tenement in Los Angeles where he would see friends coming and going across the border from Mexico. "I noticed they borrowed clothes

Above: Director Stuart Gordon poses with the author of the story on which the film is based, Ray Bradbury.
Below: Edward James Olmos (BLADE RUNNER) wears THE WONDERFUL ICE-CREAM SUIT of the title.



DERFUL ICE CREAM SUIT

the man in this adaptation of Ray Bradbury.

from one another and bought them together as we had done."

First published under the title "The Magic White Suit" in 1958 by the *Saturday Evening Post*, the story has previously been adapted for television and stage (the latter includes a straight dramatic adaptation by Bradbury himself and a musical version for which he provided the book). One of the most acclaimed versions of the play came from Chicago's Organic Theater Company in 1973. The company's co-founder, director Stuart Gordon, came across Bradbury's story, obtained the rights and mounted a production, which included such people as Joe Mantegna, Dennis Franz (NYPD BLUE), and Meshach Taylor. "They were incredibly talented, and I always had a feeling these guys were going to hit it big," Gordon recalled. The show was immensely successful, and the company toured all over the world with the production. "It's a very universal story," Gordon remarked. "Everywhere we went, even if they couldn't understand the language, they understood the play."

In one of the most recent Los Angeles productions of "The Wonderful Ice Cream Suit," the work found a fan in Roy E. Disney, the Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Walt Disney Company and head of the studio's Animation Department. "[He] kept coming to see the play, and they finally [purchased the rights] to it," Bradbury noted. The film rights were acquired close to two years ago, and Bradbury was hired to write the screenplay. Gordon, who in Bradbury's words "directed a beautiful production" was tapped to direct the film version. Bradbury and Gordon worked quite closely on the project, with Gordon encouraging the author to "give as much input as he wanted. I think it's rare that you have an author there with you when you're working on a movie," he noted. Gordon's directing credits include H.P. Lovecraft's RE-ANIMATOR (Critics Prize at the Cannes Film Festival), FORTRESS, CASTLE FREAK, and the upcoming SPACE TRUCKERS with Dennis Hopper. He is also the co-creator of HONEY, I SHRUNK THE KIDS and executive producer of the sequel, HONEY, I BLEW UP THE BABY.

Another Organic alumni who signed on to the project was Joe Mantegna, who recreated his stage role as "Gomez," the ring-

leader of the group that purchase the suit. "It's an actor's dream come true to be able to put this character and this play to film," Mantegna said. "I've got 24 years of acting and life experience in this role."

It's Gomez who sets the story in motion by deciding that to be someone important, you to have to look the part. One day, in the window of a tailor shop, he spies a perfectly white suit and decides that's the answer to his prayers. Lacking the money to buy it by himself, he rounds up three men who all have the same build: Martinez (Gonzalez), Villanazul (Sierra), and Dominguez (Morales)—described in the press materials as "the innocent, the intellectual and the romantic," respectively. Gomez convinces them to pool their meager resources (\$20 bucks each) to buy the suit. But, as Gordon explains, there's a problem. "There's a fifth guy in the group (Vamenos, played by Olmos). They let him in because he's the right size, and they need his money. He's a complete slob. He's like this street person who lives in a trash dumpster. And the suit is pure white, and [the rest of the group] are convinced he's going to destroy it." They give him a bath and give him all these rules. 'No smoking, no drinking, no eating juicy tacos.' And he of course breaks [them], and they're chasing after him trying to save the suit." At one point the piece becomes a very physical comedy, a factor that Gordon found very appealing. "I'm a big fan of the Marx brothers. But it has lots of fantasy elements as well."

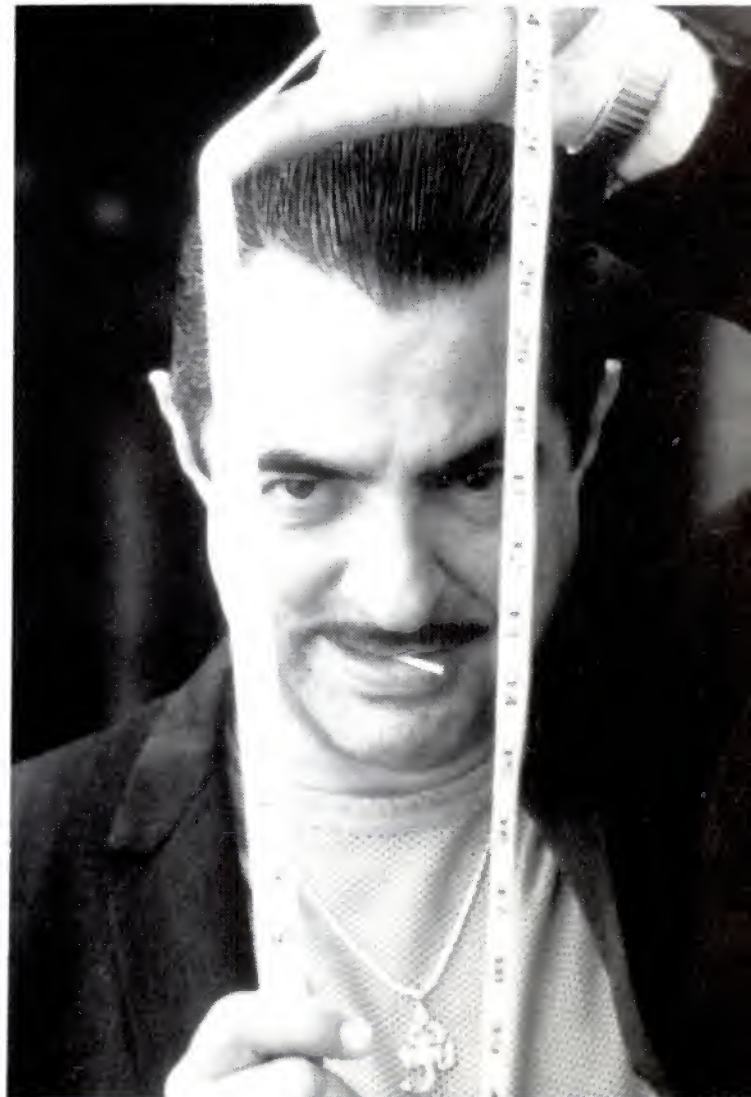
Another appealing aspect that attracted Gordon to the project was the chance to do something that wasn't pure science fiction "Heads don't explode in this one," he joked. "Bradbury's work is very poetic, and so is this. Things that happen [to the men] when they wear the suit are not realistic or possible. But they're so magical." Gordon wasn't the only person to work against his "type." As he noted: "Edward James Olmos is playing the dirty guy, Vamenos, which is a real first for him. [He's] usually thought of as a very serious actor, but here he gets a chance to be a clown and is absolutely hilarious in the movie."

Although no release date has been set as of yet, Gordon thinks the film will probably hit the screen sometime in the late spring or early summer of 1998. He's actually partial to "Cinco Demayo Day"—May 5th. "That

would be kind of appropriate," he noted. "I'm real pleased with what we got. I also know that Ray's very pleased with it. He says it's the first time that any of his work has really been produced word for word. He's always been rewritten."

Gordon sees THE WONDERFUL ICE CREAM SUIT as a family film everyone can enjoy. (Which is different from what he considers a "kids film" made strictly for young children.) Thus far, the film has been very successful in test screenings. "We've been screening it as I've been working on it," Gordon noted. "And the reactions have been terrific. [Because] it's very simple and very visual, I think everyone can relate to it. Here's this white suit, and here's this dirty guy ("Vamenos"). At one of the screenings, a little kid—he must have been three or four years old—yelled out, 'Don't let him touch the suit!' It just builds and gets funnier and funnier as it goes along, I've got very high hopes for it." □

Joe Mantegna (THINNER) recreates his stage role as Gomez, ringleader of the group that buys the suit.



EDEN

Out of body experiences elevate a touching drama to the realm of fantasy.

By Steve Biodrowski

EDEN is an interesting little drama with an intriguing premise, about a college professor's wife learning to step out of her socially determined role and make her own life. That may not sound particularly fantastic, but what's intriguing is that the woman (who is restricted not only socially but physically, by crippling multiple sclerosis) finds escape in dreams of astral projection, literally leaving her body behind for the freedom of flight. The film never endorses her flights of fancy as real, nor does it go out of its way to deny them; either way, they add an element of the fanciful to what might have been a rather conventional story.

That story first began to develop in the mind of writer-director Howard Goldberg after he read an article in the *New York Times* "about a woman who had been in a coma for two or three months," he recalled. "I cut it out and put it up on my bulletin board, and I was always looking at it and thinking about it. The kinds of thoughts that were going on were: Where was she? She was not dead. She had brain wave activity. Was it an instantaneous passage of time for her, as if she was on sodium pentathol? Or did she feel the chronological passage of time? Did she feel that she'd been some place? Did she have dreams or events? I just didn't know."

Goldberg combined these musings with elements from his own dream life. "All my life, I've always had flying dreams," he said. "I had experienced that feeling of flying every night



Writer-director Howard Goldberg prepares to film a scene for EDEN.

when I slept. At one time, I had them every night; now, not so often. These two things started to wrap around each other and evolve into something. That was the genesis of the idea."

Goldberg next had to incorporate this premise into some kind of plot, which he developed from memories of his own life. "It just started evolving," he recalled. "I actually went to a prep school, and I actually was a border in a teacher's house. I did not, however, have a crush on the teacher's wife. Much of that milieu was actual, in the respect that I lived in a place like that. Everything just clicked in my brain and created this little world that she lived in."

Goldberg set the story in the '60s because that was a time when a woman might be well educated enough to handle a profession but still be expected by her husband to stay at home. "I think it has to do with the fact that she was so 'captured,'" he said of the decision, which emphasized "the metaphor of this person's captured life in that

era. It was an era of change and naivete, so that a person like her who has multiple sclerosis, tells everybody she has bad arthritis. Whereas today a person with multiple sclerosis says, 'I have Multiple Sclerosis,' and in fact belongs to three support groups and also probably goes to a yoga class. But in her day, in the '60s, she was ashamed to even admit it. In the same way, her husband says, 'What am I supposed to do—have people think I can't support my family? No, you can't work outside the house.' Could you imagine a guy saying that today? If he did, we'd think he was some kind of Neanderthal. Whereas, in the context of the mid-'60s, he was simply himself; he was a little bit behind the times, perhaps, and a little benighted, but he wasn't evil. He was just a product of his own time.

"In the same way," Goldberg continued, "when she tells everybody she has these dreams and is leaving her body through astral projection, in the mid-'60s everybody goes, 'Uh oh!

And she's afraid to even tell anybody. Whereas today if that happened, everybody would say, 'That's so funny, because I left my body last night too!' That's why the time period was really important. It's an integral part of the entire story; it's as important as the characters—it is one of the characters. As is the prep school, too, because it becomes this little insular world in a little time period. They all kind of wrap around each other."

Goldberg kept the fantasy to a minimum, because he wanted to direct his own script, and didn't want to set himself too difficult a task. "I try not to let it get to me, but I do think on occasion, 'How the hell am I going to do this?'" he admitted. "After I finished EDEN, I decided to write a screenplay that was simple and easy—with five characters, in just one house—and it evolved so far blown out past the proportions that it will be a miracle to get it done. That film, the next one that I'm doing, is called ORPHEUS, a modern-day version of the legend. It's filled with fantasy and special effects. That started out to be a \$100,000 movie! I'll need *Dremworks* to do that one!"

Though he had not thought of attempting to convert anyone to a belief in the topic, Goldberg did "tons" of research on astral projection. "I read dozens of books and talked to many people who do it. I found there are certainly lots of people who believe very strongly in it and lots of people who believe very strongly that they can do it. In just the same way as religion, it is very, very subjective; there is no empirical proof. Never did I



Joanna Going (seen with Dylan Walsh) plays a woman with multiple sclerosis who escapes her physical limitations with dreams of astral projection.

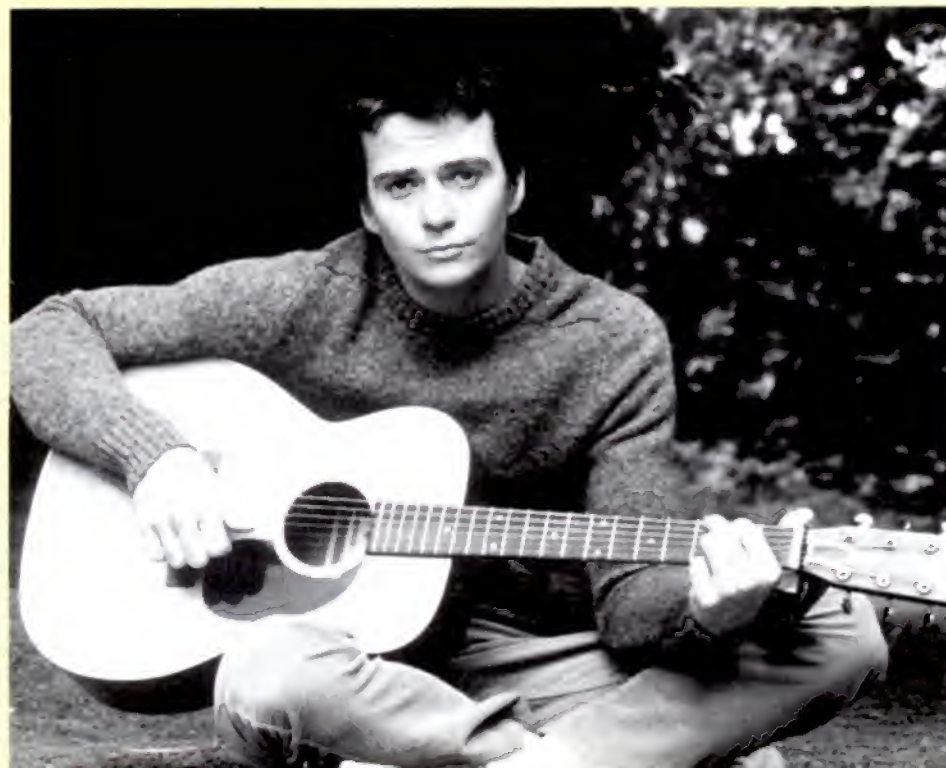
come across any kind of study, for example, where they put a guy in a room and had him leave his body and go into the next room and tell them what was in a drawer—nothing clear cut and defined like that, in a scientific nature. In the same way I can say to you, ‘Do you believe in God? Well, I want you to talk to God and tell him to knock down that tree in the front yard.’ It becomes a matter of faith, and that is the tone of the movie too. As I wrote it and as I filmed it, it was my intention that you could walk away and say, ‘Well, this did not really happen to her. This was her way of escaping from a life she couldn’t deal with. Or, you could walk away and say, ‘It was unbelievable. This is what happened to her. She left her body, and it enriched her.’ I want the story to be in the same place as the reality, which is that it becomes a question of how you perceive it and you can interpret it your way.”

The dreams of leaving the confines of the body ultimately emerged as a kind of metaphor for the character’s need to escape the bonds that held her, both physical and social. “It was a very fine line to walk on, like a razor’s edge almost,” said Goldberg. “It would have been very easy to tip in one direction or the other, without any difficulty whatsoever, clearly stating that this was a supernatural phenomenon or clearly stating that she was imagining it all. To walk that fine line was a balancing act. As in contrast to the one

I’m doing now, ORPHEUS, where it’s clearly stated that this is happening. In the world of that film, this man’s wife does die, and he does go into another world and brings her back. As opposed to EDEN, where you can decide for yourself.”

For both budgetary and dramatic reasons, Goldberg decided to keep his character’s dream sequence to a minimum, using impressionistic glimpses rather than Peter Pan flying effects. “In the script there is significantly more involved; they were much more fantastical. As the drama got more powerful, and as I edited the film, I knew that I wanted the special effects to be simpler. I wanted them to be evocative of the feelings, as opposed to in your face. In long consultations, Gene Warren Jr. and I did endless experiments to see what things looked like, until we came up with the look

Sean Patrick Flanery (POWDER) is a student at Eden College, smitten with his teacher’s beautiful wife, who comes to believe her tales of astral projection.



“I found lots of people who believe in astral projection, but there is no empirical proof. Like religion, it’s a matter of faith, and that is the tone of the movie.”

that really conveyed what we wanted.”

The result of the dreams of astral projection is that Going’s character ends up spending most of the third act in a coma—a rather unconventional piece of storytelling, Goldberg admits. “I certainly gave thought to it many times, but it was where the story went, and it was what ultimately happened to her,” he said. “I’m satisfied with how it came out dramatically, with how it works and what it means and where it takes everybody.”

After finishing the script, finding financing was Goldberg’s next hurdle—a problem that was increased because he wanted to direct himself. “There was a lot of interest in EDEN. I sold it two times before I got it back and financed it myself. After writing the screenplay, I got in a bidding war with four producers who wanted to buy it. Everybody said, ‘Sell it. Even though you won’t direct it, you’ll make a major studio film, and you’ll get to direct the next one.’ So against my better judgement I did sell it, to producer Michael Gruskoff. After a year it did not get made, and the option revert-

ed to me. I resold it to Motion Picture Corporation, and I was attached to direct this time. It still didn’t get made, and the option came back to me again. Then I won a Sundance Institute Fellowship for the screenplay. That helped me perk up interest in the independent world. I hooked up with Water Crest Films, and they came up with the money.”

Goldberg found himself pinching pennies when it came to realizing his script on film. “We certainly didn’t have the budget to do it the right way,” he said. “If this had been a Merchant-Ivory production, we would have gone to New England, but we couldn’t do that. We had to find a city that would give me the locations I wanted and would give me a professional cast and crew without having to pay per diem to put them up in hotels. We finally went to Seattle, because NORTHERN EXPOSURE had shot there and built up a stable of actors and crew. I would say 90% of my crew had been on NORTHERN EXPOSURE for 8 years, so we had a really professional crew.

“Brad Fiedel did the score for free,” Goldberg added. “When we didn’t have the money to pay for the 30-piece orchestra, he put up the money as an investment.”

As a director, Goldberg found that his script evolved on the set, once he was working with his cast. “It’s an interesting thing, because at one time or another in the process of getting this film made, there have been so many different actresses who wanted to do it and so many actresses who have been attached, from Mary Stuart Masterson to Andie MacDowell and Melanie Griffith—this list is long. Ultimately, I made it with Joanna Going, and now it’s hard to

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The Space Family Robinson wanders the galaxy again, in a big screen remake.

BY ALAN JONES

It was the first television space fantasy of the '60s and the second prime time success (after VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA) for producer Irwin Allen, cinema's future "Master of Disaster" (thanks to THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE and THE TOWERING INFERNO). Now, the world can echo once more with the catch-phrase 'Danger, Will Robinson,' as LOST IN SPACE—a \$100-million-plus science fiction epic—glides to the big screen this Spring.

Inspired by the CBS series, which aired between September 15, 1965 and September 11, 1968, New Line Cinema's biggest-ever production remains faithful to the spirit of the show and its characters while spectacularly embroidering on its intergalactic fantasy aspects. With a 21-week production schedule, which started on March 4, 1997, LOST IN SPACE was shot entirely at London's Shepperton Studios on eight sound stages where enormous sets depicted alien



The new Robinson family: Jack Johnson (Will), Heather Graham (Judy), Lacey Chabert (Penny), William Hurt (John), and Mimi Rogers (Maureen).

landscapes and impressive interiors of the newly designed Jupiter II spacecraft.

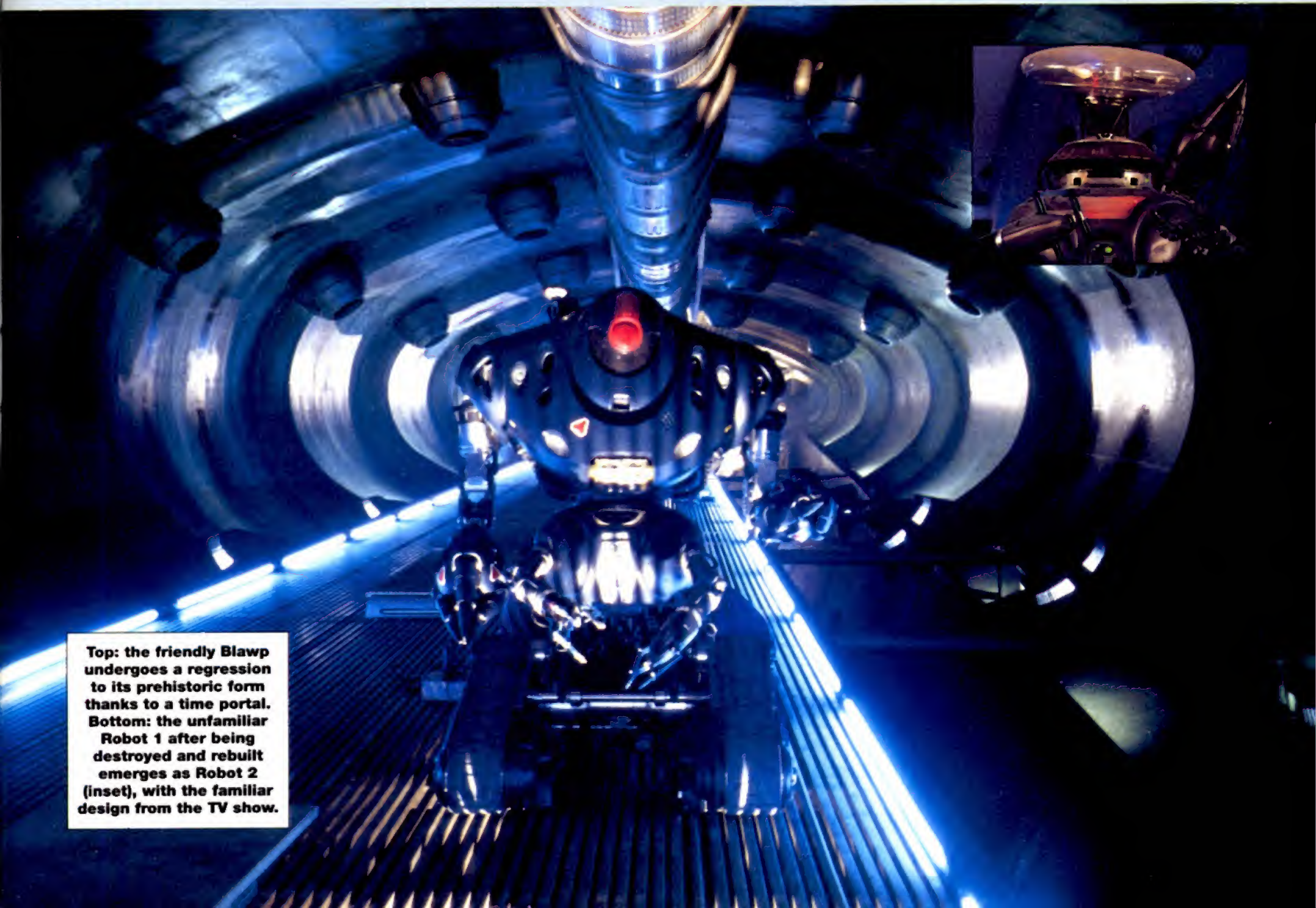
Directed by Stephen Hopkins (THE GHOST AND THE DARKNESS), the film stars Gary Oldman (THE FIFTH ELEMENT) as Dr. Zachary Smith, William Hurt (DARK CITY), Mimi Rogers (AUSTIN POW-

ERS), Heather Graham (BOOGIE NIGHTS), Lacey Chabert (PARTY OF FIVE), and Jack Johnson as the Space Family Robinson, and Matt Le Blanc (FRIENDS) as their pilot, Major Don West.

Written and produced by Akiva Goldsman who penned the screenplays for BATMAN

FOREVER and BATMAN & ROBIN, LOST IN SPACE deliberately eschews the camp humor and kitsch scenarios that defined the TV show in its second and third series. Populated with otherworldly creatures and hi-tech robots created by Jim Henson's Creature Shop, LOST IN SPACE also features over 700 computer-generated visual effects—an industry record.

In Goldsman's script, the Robinsons are selected to be the first family unit to test out the experimental warp drive Hypergate route into the far reaches of the galaxy and research the colonization possibilities of the stars. But they are marooned along with stowaway-saboteur Zachary Smith when the sinister doctor's traitorous tinkering lands them in a perilous corner of space. There the cosmic castaways must deal with an insidious threat from the alien moon spiders encountered earlier aboard the bandit Proteus spaceship, and confront erratic time portals which bring the resilient family face to face with their future and past selves.



Top: the friendly Blawp undergoes a regression to its prehistoric form thanks to a time portal. Bottom: the unfamiliar Robot 1 after being destroyed and rebuilt emerges as Robot 2 (inset), with the familiar design from the TV show.



After docking with the Proteus Probe, and encountering the dangers within (above), the Jupiter blasts away to safety (inset).

Long in gestation, the movie version of **LOST IN SPACE** started out at Twentieth Century Fox in the early '90s, where it was viewed as a more comedic venture altogether. When studio interest in the property waned, producer Mark Koch secured the rights to the show from Sheila Allen, Irwin's widow, and began looking for financing. One of the parties interested was Richard Saperstein, executive vice president of production for New Line Cinema. Saperstein said, "Akiva [Goldsmann] and I went to college together. We absolutely

adored the **LOST IN SPACE** TV show. Akiva loved to play the role of Penny Robinson! I called Akiva and said if he would write the script for the film, I would buy the property."

Goldsmann added, "It's true that **LOST IN SPACE** was my favorite show on TV. I watched it every day and surrendered to its charms constantly. My best friend Jonathan and I played it every day; we really did. He was John Robinson and I was Don West, and we had two plastic steering wheel spacecraft things we sat in front of and manipulated frantically. We played it for years, well into pu-

berty, when I started fantasizing about romancing Judy Robinson."

When Goldsmann watched old episodes of the series again in preparation for writing the script, he was appalled. "The truth is my memory of the show was different from the actual show itself. What I held in my heart was an action-adventure that seemed to be about people surviving in adverse circumstances. What I saw after watching the tapes over and over again was a bit of that, sure, but mostly a great deal of high camp and a lot of '60s silver face paint. It scared me. I

set out to write a script that was true to the TV series in its original form, but also true to what I loved about the show, either evident or implicit. The later episodes of the TV show were campy and funny. Our film isn't. There's a lot of humor in it; we've tried to be true to the spirit of the show in places where it seems appropriate, and there are well-placed reminders of it. But the scale, scope, and focus has changed drastically. In the original show the Jupiter II seemed to be the size of a two-bedroom condo. Now it's as big as the Colosseum!"

Goldsmann wrote three drafts

Left: Major Don West in his futuristic armor for dangerous encounters. Below: West (Matt LeBlanc) provides romantic interest for Judy (Heather Graham).





SPECIAL FX

Updating old techniques with new technology

By Alan Jones

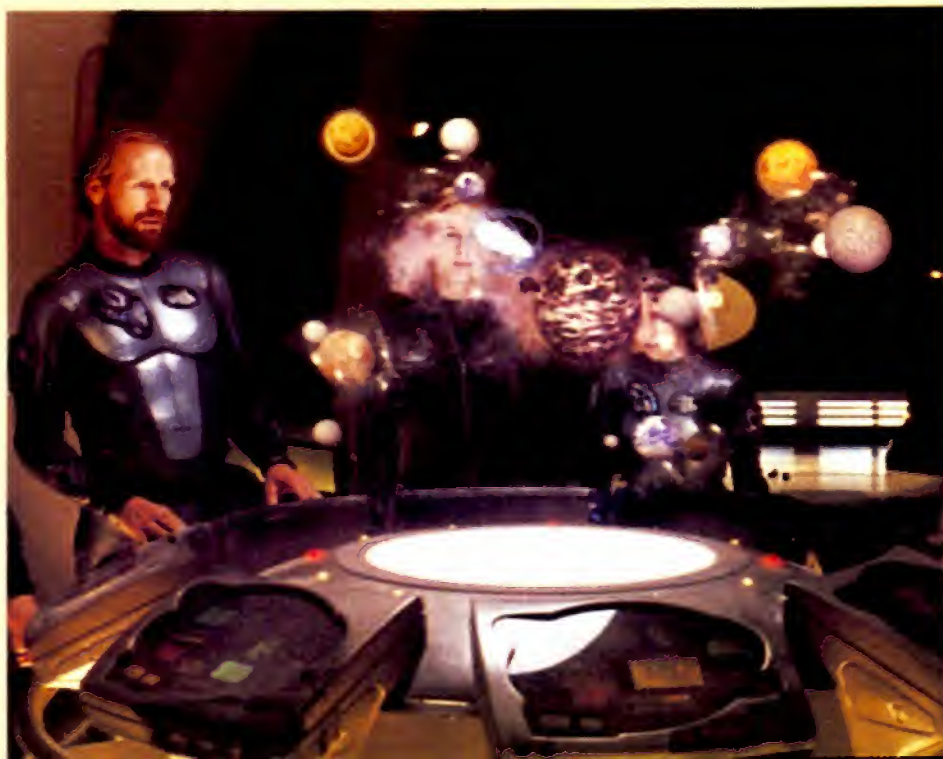
Visual effects supervisor Angus John Bickerton previously worked on *THE ADVENTURES OF PINOCCHIO*, which found him teaming with Jim Henson's Creature Shop: Henson personnel manipulated the title animatronic puppet while Bickerton removed the rod-puppeteers via computer graphics. The partnership has been continued with *LOST IN SPACE*, as Bickerton is working in conjunction with Creature Shop supervisor Verner Gresty, who worked on such films as *THE WITCHES* and *TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES*. Gresty remarked, "There is a crossover in every effects area. I've never been so dependent on so many other departments before. It's a real step forward in the way the industry must adapt as the new technologies evolve."

The nearly 700 effects shots in *LOST IN SPACE*—an industry record—break down into four main areas: the Blawp, a space monkey; the Spider Smith sequence; the two Robots; and the spacecraft. Bickerton and Gresty crossed over mainly in the former two areas. Gresty said, "The Blawp is a chameleon creature who changes color to match its surroundings. The Robinsons meet the 2-foot creature in the hydroponics laboratory on board the Proteus probe. We created all the maquettes at Hensons and were very aware how user-friendly from a merchandising point of view it had to be. We were driven by the merchandising to some degree, but the head office request was that the Blawp had to be a believable

creature, first. That was difficult actually, because what does an alien have to have to be real?"

Gresty continued, "We built five versions of the Blawp for various functions like clinging on to the actors, clambering up walls, and running down corridors. These were all basic animatronics—the most complex had full facial movement from a control system. There were 30 servo-controls for the face movements, especially blinking and lip-synching. Although the Blawp doesn't have many lines, he had to have a really emotive face. The body moves were rod-controlled because that gives the most fluid movement. And rod removal is so easy these days. For the sequence where the Robinsons enter a time portal and end up in the future, we had to build an 8-foot, 6-inch adult Blawp. This was a big rig on a counterweighted pole-arm with a man inside to operate the head and to get the accurate eye-lines. The arms are cable-controlled right to the fingers."

The navigational console aboard the Jupiter II displays a holographic projection of the planetary system, mapping the ship's course through outer space.



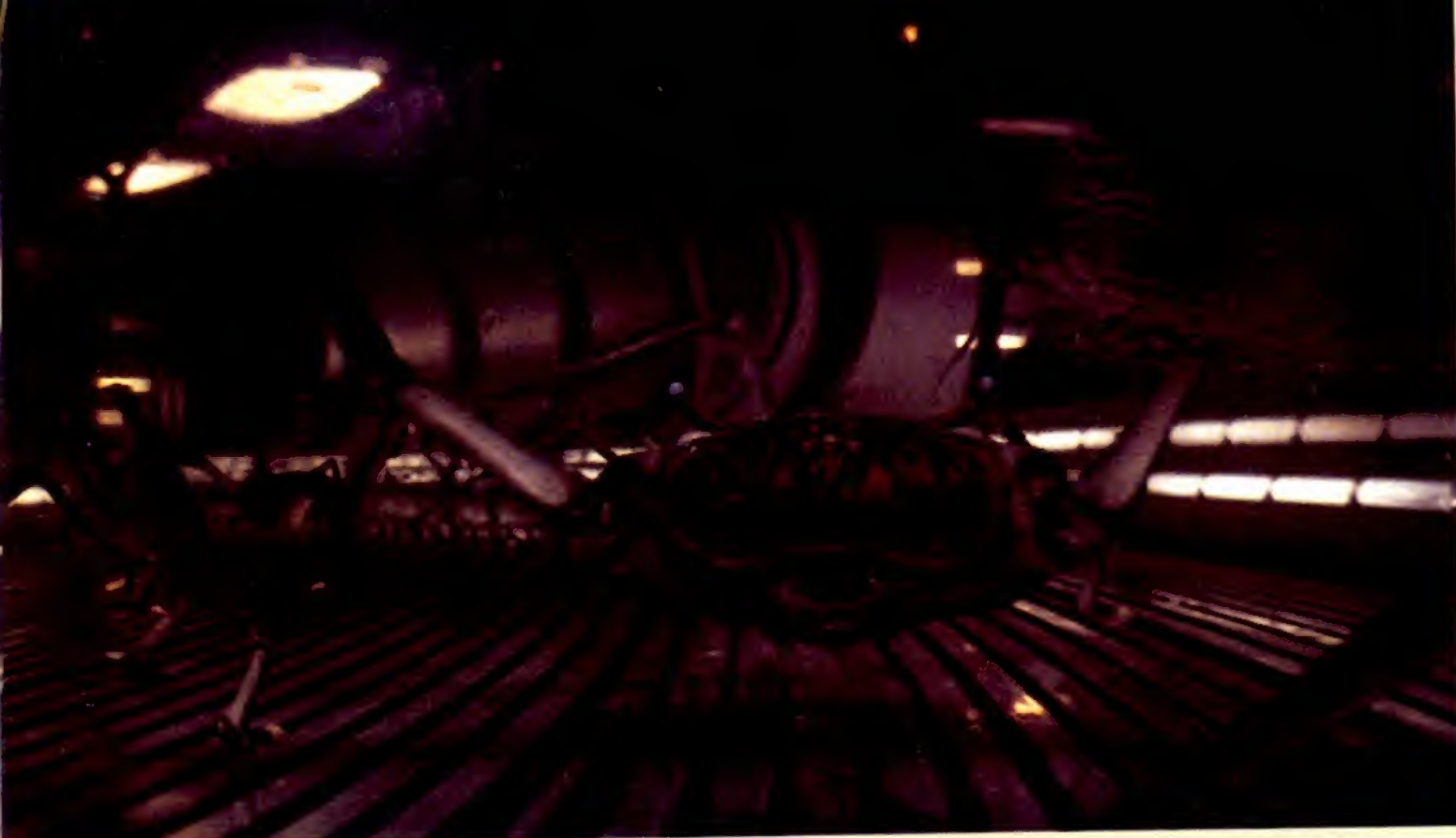
The new Jupiter II updates the design from the old TV show. Effects supervisor Angus John Bickerton preferred miniatures to achieve realistic detail.

The Blawp is 60 per cent animatronic and 40 per cent computer graphics. Bickerton said, "Removing the rod puppeteers digitally is fine, but it does have its limitations. We can't do it that fast, and it's very complicated when a rod gets in the way or crosses over a body. So for wider shots, computer graphics were the obvious answer. Integrating a 3D cartoon character into an animatronic set-up without shrieking "*animation*" is really tough, though. You don't want the Blawp ending up like Dino in *THE FLINTSTONES*, which just didn't look real at all. You can do amazing things with computer graphics, no question, but you have to integrate them properly."

The Spider Smith sequence is mainly actor Gary Oldman's head in full facial makeup placed on a computer-graphic spider's body, but Gresty had to provide numerous animatronic inserts for close-ups when he touches the other actors. He said, "The hardest part was making sure all aspects of this sequence ensures Gary retains his out-

rageous character. He's wearing an eight-piece face prosthetic with spines, contact lenses and teeth, and it's all pretty scary. Everyone has a fear of spiders, I think, and being chased by hundreds of alien ones must be the worst nightmare."

One Creature Shop contribution of which Gresty is particularly proud is the design of Robot 1 (R1) and Robot 2 (R2). He explained, "R1 was built at the Henson workshop in an unusual way. Rather than go ahead and simply make a robot, we stayed at our work stations to computer design the mechanics properly. Then we made all the parts and bolted them to-



The Henson Creature shop gave a tripod shape to the alien spiders, to make them more fanciful and less frightening.

gether. It was an anxious time waiting to see if the bits would fit. We had to duplicate everything because there were two R1's built, one for main unit and one for the second. Looking back, I'd make the same decision to design on computer first. It was the only way we could design something this complicated to make sure it worked at the end of our tight 14-week schedule."

Gresty continued, "R1 is over eight feet tall when extended and took four people to operate. They were wired up for direct control purposes, so when they moved their arms, so did the R1; when they turned at the waist, the machine followed suit, etc. Via computer we could duplicate those movements exactly if we wanted to. When R1 is blown up thanks to Dr. Smith's nefarious plans, Will Robinson takes the parts and builds R2 into the more familiar design fans of the series will recognize. Both Robots had to have distinct styles, so I don't think anyone will initially guess that R2 can be assembled from R1. Will includes an additional piece which is the key to recognizing the famous Robot. I think it's a clever concept and very nicely handled."

Gresty continued, "R2 was slightly simpler in terms of actual engineering, because it has to do more talking and have more character lines. I don't want to give the impression it was easier to manipulate, though. Safety was a major consideration; you couldn't take your eyes off it for a single moment, and we put R2 on a powered track unit to steer it around corners without bumping into anyone. It hurtled around actually and worked extremely well on film. Neither Robot was an animatronic prop. They were solid metal. We couldn't cheat and build half-bodies either. We had to see both Robots in full frame as much as possible. That was important for the director."

With the Creature Shop handling the Robots, Angus Bickerton could spend time overseeing the spacecraft visual effects, in-

cluding the Jupiter I, the Jupiter II, the Proteus probe, the Launch Dome and its Mission Control off-shoot. He said, "I decided I'd rather see 95% convincing miniature models than 95% convincing computer graphics. Building models in the computer of such design complexity would have been a huge task. In practical terms, the costs balance out. I've had ten model-makers working for five months on the movie. It would take less man hours on a computer. But rendering such minute detail would have taken...I don't know how long. Everything you see in LOST IN SPACE is real with key CGI moments to cover stuff like the Jupiter II changing shape when it goes into hyper-drive."

Most of the spacecraft designs evolved from Stephen Hopkins' fertile imagination. Bickerton explained, "Stephen told us we couldn't mess with the LOST IN SPACE lore to any great degree, but I think we all came up with some surprising ways of incorporating that into our designs. The Jupiter II is a good example. No one in the show ever explained why it was called the Jupiter II. So we devised our own explana-

tion. We contrived this idea of having our Jupiter II design born from the ashes of the Jupiter 1—the latter looking like the original show's design except scaled up to a massive 800 feet in diameter. The Jupiter 1 launches from this huge dome; the audience will heave a sigh of nostalgia when they see the familiar shape; then sections of it break apart, and our Jupiter II design emerges from the sections. It looks wonderful. Our Jupiter II was a 6-foot and a 2-foot model with other sections built to order when required, and production designer Norman Garwood built the crashed ship for real on the sound stage." The original Jupiter II in the TV series had the official-looking logo 277-2211 IA painted on the side, a reference to Twentieth Century Fox's phone number and Irwin Allen's initials. This idea was commandeered by Bickerton, who added with a laugh, "Any other numbers you see are the crew's mobile phone numbers."

The intricate Jupiter 1 model was built on N stage at Shepperton Studios, where the interior of the launch dome was also built. All interior shots were filmed on N stage, and daylight shots were filmed on the Shepperton back-lot against real sky and sunsets for extra verisimilitude. Bickerton said, "If you look at the original TV show, you'll notice that some of the best special effects had the Jupiter II on wires being filmed against a desert landscape. Those shots still hold up today. So we decided to do the same with our 25th-scale Jupiter II, which is supposed to be 300 feet in diameter. We shot into the sun to give it an outside back-lit look, at a high-speed—360 frames per second—for the best definition."

The back-lot, complete with alien model landscapes built to correspond to the

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The 2 foot Blawp, in its original form, was designed to be "user-friendly, from a merchandising point of view."



CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

“I fell on the floor laughing when I watched the videotapes,” said Stephen Hopkins. “I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t disappointed. The TV show plays better in memory now.”

altogether of the screenplay, but it was while he was working on the second draft that director Stephen Hopkins entered the picture. Hopkins had directed *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 5: THE DREAM CHILD* for New Line in 1989, and Richard Saperstein declared, “I was thrilled when Stephen agreed to direct. He has a keen sense of story, visual imagination, and a sadistic sense of humor.”

Goldsman remarked, “Essentially the movie was what it was, and I’d gotten it green-lit from the second draft. The script wasn’t as articulated, refined, clever, or as complex in terms of the subtleties of the motion through the story as it became when Stephen came on board as ‘Pay or Play’ director (which in essence means you’re making the movie), and we went through it together. Nothing drastically changed except for the addition of the Spider Smith sequence which we, and Richard, came up with—a wonderful set-piece.”

He continued, “Stephen helped tremendously in simplifying the time travel aspects of the story which were unbelievably complicated in the earlier drafts. Holes were opening and closing in different time zones so fast, he realized no one would get it. What is entirely Hopkins about *LOST IN SPACE* is the way the movie looks. Not from the point of view of the cinematography [by Peter Levy, a long-time Hopkins’ associate] as such but because it has a very cool feel, dark but alive with a visual and emotional tone that only he could draw out. This movie has a wonderful authenticity and sexiness. Cool is the right word, and the movie is much cooler than the script. It has an edge to it my words and narrative don’t. I write from a story point of

view, not a visual one, which is why I’m being constantly amazed when I watch the rushes. What could have been pretty flatfooted under another director’s guidance has been elevated to another plane altogether by Stephen.”

Director Hopkins was likewise shocked by how inane the original series was when he treated himself to a video retrospective on signing for the movie. He noted, “I loved the show because it wasn’t restricted to galaxies exploding; it was also about who was the best Go-Go dancer in the universe. I fell on the floor laughing when I watched the videotapes, but I’d be lying if I said I wasn’t disappointed. It plays better in the memory now. People don’t want to sit around watching two hours of camp. Clearly, we had to change focus and direction with the movie. It had to have plot tension, danger, and importance because, otherwise, who would care about this stranded family?”

What was vastly important for Hopkins was the overall look of the movie. He said, “I chased production designer Norman Garwood (*BRAZIL*) for a very long time because I wanted to work with him, and



Stephen Hopkins directs Jack Johnson as Will Robinson.

when I got him we talked to NASA about what they expected to happen to our world in the next century. They said it would become very bland; humans would sit in little plastic rooms surrounded by monitors talking to computers. They didn’t expect anyone to do anything. For our purposes humans would have to have some physicality and control. So we went back to ’60s comic book design and have gone to great lengths to make our future real. In the series, the *Jupiter II* took off into space on October, 1997. Their future vision of our reality is that TV show! It didn’t happen, thank heavens. Likewise, this is what we think—hope?—will happen.”

Goldsman added, “We’ve tried to be technologically viable in our future. All the detailing tries to pay attention to science without losing the fun element.” Nowhere is that more evident than in the *Jupiter II* interiors built on several of the

Shepperton sound stages. There’s the elaborate bridge, the lower decks, and the super-sleek engine room which plays a pivotal part in the action adventure’s present and future climax. The robot bay is where Robot 1 is stored before he’s destroyed by Dr. Smith and rebuilt by Will Robinson into the more familiar design of the famous Robot from the TV series. A laboratory and sick bay have been added to the interior of the *Jupiter II* because, laughed Goldsman, “We figured Judy Robinson needed a job rather than just be blonde and pretty. She’s the ship’s physician.”

The most impressive set of all is spread across the newly constructed J and K stages, featuring the crash-landed *Jupiter II* on one complete side of the studio wall. Goldsman explained, “The spaceship has just had a severe altercation in space and has been hurled through the atmosphere of this alien world. It’s gone through a raging space blizzard, through a mountain range, skipped off a frozen lake like a rock and slammed into the wall of a crater—all CGI action. The *Jupiter II* has slid in hard but then its hydraulic legs have extended and righted the craft so we are able to play the scenes on level ground on the set.”

Goldsman is an admitted ‘set junkie.’ When not attending to the finer details of the production, he’s always on set drinking in the unique atmosphere and watching everything very closely. In this in-

John, West, Dr. Smith, and Judy explore the Proteus Probe.



stance, that's par for the course because, along with Hopkins, he's one of the producers of *LOST IN SPACE*. He said, "I'm very lucky. I got trained by Joel Schumacher. We have made four movies together [*BATMAN FOREVER*, *BATMAN & ROBIN*, *THE CLIENT*, and *A TIME TO KILL*], and he invited me into the filmmaking process because he believes that writing is a department in the way that production design is a department. So I got trained in how to work a show from prep to post-production and how to handle every component that was required of me in terms of writing. That's not just in terms of getting it down on paper but working with the actors and seeing what they can bring to the table. I learned a lot more than I knew I'd learned."

He continued, "I got to London and realized I knew most of the stuff we had to deal with. Stephen was very welcoming in terms of participation and collaboration too. *LOST IN SPACE* has been graduate school for me. My learning curve has been so steep, and I couldn't have hoped for a better testing ground. Stephen and I have split the dealing with New Line stuff. The actual politics of getting the money to make the movie is unbelievably tortuous and it changes over the course of the movie. We also had some personnel changes which, without dwelling on it, required a lot of...new diplomacy skills. But it has all been a strengthening experience." (Goldsman is referring to here the early replacement of actor Sean Patrick Flanery [*POWDER*] as Major Don West with Matt LeBlanc.)

Not that New Line have been anything but supportive. Said Goldsman "I feel personally and professionally indebted to New Line and responsible to them. They've put a lot of money behind us and have given us a great deal of creative autonomy. The only way I can fulfill my obligation to them is to make *LOST IN SPACE* the best movie I can, send it out there and hope I like it because there are other people out there like me who'll hopefully like it too. My relationship to the day has changed because of my produc-

THE NEW MAUREEN ROBINSON

"I set only one table, and I prepare no meals," said Mimi Rogers. "June Lockhart didn't do much apart from that. Unlike the series, Maureen is a well-rounded character."



Don West, Dr. Smith, Judy Robinson, and John Robinson don space suit to enter the derelict Proteus Probe, which will result in their becoming "lost in space."

er role. Suddenly, it's, 'Oh my God,' why aren't they moving faster?' But it's mainly about facilitating the environment so the director can direct, and knowing where you need someone and filling that spot through delegation. Frankly, I felt pressure on me more with *THE CLIENT* because it was the first movie I'd written that was getting made. Everyday I was waiting to be fired because I couldn't believe anyone thought my writing was good enough to be seen on screen. That was intolerable. After that I can cope with anything."

Both Goldsman and Hopkins point to the casting of the movie as the pivotal point where *LOST IN SPACE* transformed into something extra special. Goldsman explained, "The casting process really was where the whole movie changed. Stephen and I looked at each other and agreed we wanted real actors having real emotions. You always hope for

that when you're writing a script, but then a studio usually goes, 'Let's get big TV guys for it,' and you groan. Here, it was a case of hunkering down and agreeing Dr. Smith was going to be our lynch pin. If we could get a really superb actor to play Smith, then we could generalize outward from that calibre of casting. And we did. It was an incredible series of struggles, but when Gary Oldman finally settled to play Smith, and William Hurt followed soon afterwards, suddenly we were making a real movie."

Gary Oldman admitted to initially being wary of the Smith role but added, "At the end of the day you have to rely on the words on the script page. That is your map of the world. And when the writing is as good as it was here, I didn't have to look too far beyond those black and white words to make my final decision. Plus, Akiva Goldsman's intention was clearly to steer the movie away from the TV series as much as possible. Special ef-

fects movies are boring to make. When you spend whole weeks responding to nothing, it throws method acting completely out of the window, so there's got to be lots of other things going on to make the process worthwhile." In Oldman's case, what also helped was his alleged \$4 million salary, plus favorable percentage deal on all merchandise carrying his image.

In William Hurt's case, the *ALTERED STATES* actor accepted the role of John Robinson because, "I liked the way the whole movie was being approached, and there was a dimension to the script you don't often find in science fiction. The time portals within time holes concept is just amazing. Stephen Hopkins is wide open to suggestion too and a very audacious director. Akiva's script has really opened up the material and answers numerous questions the original series never had a chance to delve into. And it goes deep into those questions. Nor do I feel the special effects are stultifying the material—they are complimenting it."

As for Mimi Rogers, the actress joked, "As Maureen Robinson, I set only one table and I prepare no meals! June Lockhart didn't do much in the show apart from that. What's great about Akiva's script is Maureen is a fully modern woman, a professor on a level with her husband. She's an integral part of the mission and spends a great deal of time trying to keep her family together. Unlike in the series, Maureen is a well-rounded character with no artificial restrictions."

Each of the actors has signed a contract including an option for sequels, should the box office warrant it. Director Hopkins commented, "That's why we chose this ensemble of actors: sequels mean they have to get on with each other. Akiva and I have already spoken about the possibility of sequels, because the concept has such an infinite amount of possibilities. Any story can happen, in any galaxy, in any time, with any theme. You're not just stuck in one place, and that's exciting."

But any sequel will still re-

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DR. SMITH, I PRESUME

Gary Oldman on replacing Jonathan Harris.

By Alan Jones

Gary Oldman, the 39-year-old actor who rocketed to fame as Sid Vicious in *SID AND NANCY* before appearing in such high-profile genre films as *BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA* and *THE FIFTH ELEMENT*, takes on the villainous role of the Doctor Zachary Smith in *LOST IN SPACE*. Oldman said, "I read the script and thought it would be fun to play; it's as simple as that. Aki-va Goldsman's screenplay said a lot of nice things about values, family, father-son relationships, caring, and love. It wasn't just a wham-bang shoot-'em up. What do they say now?"

Oh yes, it's a description that really kills me—"a roller coaster ride"! Whenever I read that in reviews, I immediately think 'piece of shit!' Sure, these films may move fast, but that's because they're edited well; if you analyze them, they're not very good. *LOST IN SPACE* has heart, a great story, and marvelous special effects, and is well on the way to being quite wonderful."

Even though he liked Goldsman's script, Oldman wasn't sure he wanted to play Dr. Smith. "I'm tired of playing villains in all honesty, but Stephen Hopkins' take on the subject intrigued me enough to reconsider the Smith role. I felt in safe hands. Plus they decided to pay me a lot of money...."

Nevertheless, the actor did feel a little apprehensive about taking on a role played to perfection by Jonathan Harris in the TV series. He added, "It was clearly going to be quite a challenge to make Smith as good as Harris did. I'm not joking—I mean that sincerely. However, the old adage is true: if it isn't on the page, it isn't on the stage. Aki-va's writing had done all the hard work for me. He'd kept the spirit of the original show but balanced it with what audiences



Gary Oldman, who excelled at villainy in *THE FIFTH ELEMENT*, plays Dr. Smith more in line with the characterization of the TV show's first season.

expect from a multi-million movie today. Actually, I kept falling into a set pattern at first. I'd always want to have more fun with Smith than I was being allowed to. Believe me, it's hard for someone like myself not to resist overdoing the camp with such a character so ripe for it. It has been difficult for that reason to set my own seal on Dr. Smith, but I feel people will like what I've done."

He continued, "When I was first offered the part, my initial reaction was, 'Shouldn't he be older?' Punk isn't the right word, but Stephen wanted someone visceral who could put an edge into the character. You never felt Smith was much of a threat in the series—he was more this doddering old buffoon. Someone younger added a sinister threat and gave the role an intensity. We were making an exciting intergalactic adventure after all, not 'Carry on Spacemen.'"

The production provided videocassettes of the series for Oldman. He laughed, "I watched about ten minutes and fell asleep! I used to love the show so much, too. Now I think I was drawn more to Penny Robinson [Angela Cartwright] in retrospect. It seems the whole of the male crew on the picture

had a thing for her. Everyone's eyes light up when you mention Penny!"

In fact, Oldman keeps himself fairly flexible when it comes to research. He said, "I come to the table with a bit of homework under my belt and a few ideas of my own, but I try not to preconceive anything because it tends to flatten the performance in my case. I have worked with people who are frozen by being too rigid about research, which is why I tend to be fairly free myself. I can't say it too succinctly—the material comes above everything else. A director can do all the razzle-dazzle camera moves in the world and pull out all the stylistic stops,

but he'll never be able to disguise bad material. Actors plaster over the cracks—that's what we are primarily asked to do."

Oldman has never been a fan of science fiction films. "They've never appealed to me. While the rest of my class at school were watching *JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS*, I'd be watching *A HARD DAY'S NIGHT!* Fantasy movies aren't something I go see. Actually, I often appear in movies I'd never dream of seeing. I may have seen *THE FIFTH ELEMENT* because of Luc Besson (I made *THE PROFESSIONAL* with the director), but with my hand on my heart I can't say for certain."

Oldman realizes die-hard fans of the series may be disappointed by the finessed tone and style of the *LOST IN SPACE* movie. He remarked, "There's a certain segment of the audience who want the silver face paint, the papier-mâché boulders, and the wobbly *DOCTOR WHO* sets. But I hope they come and see the movie with as little prejudice as possible. We had a very early press conference to show exactly what we were trying to achieve and help people lose the baggage they seem to have

when it comes to thinking in terms of the film as an extended version of the series. I even had a friend of mine—English, naturally—snobbily say to me, ‘Oh Gary, you can’t possibly be considering LOST IN SPACE.’ And my thought was, *Well, why not? Just you fucking watch me!* It became a challenge to prove everyone wrong and show them our choices were exactly the right ones. Two hours of camping about in the style of the show would have been totally boring. I’m completely behind the way Akiva and Stephen have reinvented the concept.”

For Oldman, the best thing about Stephen Hopkins as a director is he asks all the right questions. He explained, “He’s not like Luc Besson. For example, in *THE FIFTH ELEMENT* when actress Milla Jovovich is DNA’d back to life in that glass tube, why does she have that terrible dyed red hair? Luc wouldn’t dream of answering that question even if it arose. He obviously included it because it looked funky and highly visual. Stephen would have stopped and said, ‘Why that shade? No need for that, it intrudes on the reality.’ I like him doing that. I want him to question the fundamental issues of reality. Obviously, Luc and Stephen’s approaches are entirely different, and it’s whatever works for them. Yet I prefer Stephen’s method. The world Stephen has created in *LOST IN SPACE* is real first and functional second. Quirky comedy comes a low third, and that’s the correct order”.

However, many of the beloved themes of the original show are cleverly highlighted in the movie, often with a surprising twist. Oldman continued, “Smith’s bitchy relationship with the Robot is carried on, and I’m always throwing comments at it. Yes, I do say ‘Bubble-headed booby’ and ‘Mechanical Moron.’ My relationship with Will is more-or-less intact, too. The Robinson family in general don’t speak to me because I put the family in danger. I’m far too creepy for the girls, and Don West, like in the series, just can’t stand me. The Robot is a piece of machinery so that connection is entirely different. No, the only one I can manipulate is Will—and I do”.

The scene which Oldman has just finished shooting is a prime example of how writer Goldsman has used dialogue from the series to new effect in the movie. Oldman explained, “I’m being sucked into a time portal that has appeared outside the Jupiter II, and Don West is trying to save me. I’m in absolute agony, and I say, ‘Oh the pain, the pain’, one of Smith’s famous

BREAKING CAMP

“The world that Stephen Hopkins has created is real first and functional second,” said Gary Oldman. “Quirky comedy comes a low third, and that’s the correct order.”



Heather Graham, Mimi Rogers, and Gary Oldman on the bridge of Jupiter II.

lines—but for real! I also say ‘Never fear, Smith is here’ and have a few pithy comments of my own. ‘Pouting is such sweet sorrow’ is one. Another is when Don West is playing with the Blawp and going ‘Oh, isn’t he cute’. My reply is, ‘I recommend Major that you never breed. That by the way is my medical opinion’. Then there’s the moment when we’re looking at all these fabulous robots on the Probe ship, and John Robinson says something like ‘Oh my God, these are a new model. I’ve never seen them before’. And I turn to the Robot and utter, ‘Well, aren’t you the poor cousin.’ In the same way that Akiva wittily spiced up the last two *BATMAN* movies, he’s applied the same credo here.”

While Oldman and his fellow cast members have spent whole weeks looking at nothing—special effects supplying the visuals at a later date—he alone has the main prosthetic make-up chores for the ‘Spider Smith’ sequence. At an early stage, Smith is struck by an alien spider’s claw and later transforms into a bristly mutant arachnid. He elaborated, “The actual make-up is pretty straightforward. It’s an eight-piece prosthetic applied over the whole of my head. It’s par-for-the-course stuff, which has me sitting in a make-up chair for hours on end. I’m used to that after *BRAM STOKERS DRACULA* and *THE FIFTH ELEMENT*, so no big deal. What is unusual about the sequence is I’m suspended from a crane in front of a green screen wearing a green outfit on the rest of my body. They only want my head which will be put on a CGI spider

body at a later date. If I want to speak to someone my head turns while my body remains stationary, hence the crane to give my movements a seamless fluidity. Being just a floating head tends to throw a great deal of method acting out of the window!”

This image, as well as the ordinary guise of Dr. Smith, will be on sale as plastic figurines. How does Oldman feel about becoming a franchise commodity? “It isn’t the first time. Model kits of *Dracula* were available, but certainly not as mass-marketed as the *LOST IN SPACE* toys will be. William Hurt said he’d try and be the best John Robinson ever, with the biggest heart, so his son would be proud to take his image to school on a lunch box. As the villain of the piece, what could I tell my kid? I suppose people could buy them to stick pins in....”

Oldman’s perspective on acting has changed over the past two years because he sunk \$3 million of his own money into

funding his writing and directing debut, *NIL BY MOUTH*, a semi-autobiographical portrait of a dysfunctional London working class family. The deeply personal film—dedicated to the memory of Oldman’s father—was executive produced by Luc Besson. “It wasn’t that I had a burning desire to throw a camera around; I just wanted to tell that particular story. I financed it myself to retain complete control, so I wouldn’t have arguments with any of the men in suits who don’t know what they’re fucking talking about. Directing has given me an extra edge. I know everything now about the entire craft of film-making. I knew what was going on before but not how to do it”.

He continued, “I could never direct something like *LOST IN SPACE*, though. Stephen has my greatest respect. I’d be happy to return to this milieu every two years or so for any sequels. The great thing about this franchise is it isn’t earthbound. In space they can come up with anything. If I can turn into a spider, I could be 8 feet tall with blond hair next time. I don’t like acting particularly—I’ve made no secret of that. If I’m going to commit to a role for four months, it’s got to be something I can enjoy, have fun with and throw myself into. It’s a miracle movies get made when you consider all the elements you have to juggle. I’ve found being part of *LOST IN SPACE* very rewarding; I’m happy with it; and my instinct is that it will be Stephen’s breakthrough movie. But at the moment I don’t know how it’s going to turn out. And that’s my definition of Art.” □



CAMEO CASTING

Why you won't see all the classic cast on screen.

Though feature film remakes of TV shows have sometimes preferred to ignore the actors from original series, this was not the case with *LOST IN SPACE*. Although major featured roles were not offered to the TV performers, cameo appearances (not unlike those of the original *BRADY BUNCH* cast in the big screen relaunch) were proffered, at least to some of the *LOST IN SPACE* stars. Mark Goddard appears briefly in the film as a general. June Lockhart has a cameo as a non-human assistant to the Mimi Rogers character, and Angela Cartwright and Marta Kristen also have their brief moments on the screen.

In the case of Bill Mummy, in spite of his willingness to try out

for the small role of the adult Will Robinson, it was decided to go with another actor. On the other hand, the production actively and aggressively pursued Jonathan Harris to appear in the film, but he rejected their offer out of hand because of how minuscule the part would have been.

"I'm not in the movie," he stated very matter-of-factly. "I declined an offer to appear in a role that was totally unacceptable to me. Well, they laughingly call it a cameo, but I call it a fucking bit! And I've been around long enough to recognize a bit when I see one, and I don't do bits. Never have and not about to start. I'm a bit long in the tooth to start doing bits, and frankly I was a bit insulted. I know very well why it was offered to me—they wanted my presence for

Jonathan Harris, the Robot, and Bill Mummy. Unlike the other cast members from the TV series, the two actors will not be appearing in the movie remake.



The surviving TV stars at a recent convention appearance: Angela Cartwright, Marta Kristen, Mark Goddard, Jonathan Harris, June Lockhart, and Bill Mummy.

publicity value. Well, I was not about to give them that and suffer the indignity of doing six stupid lines! Not this chicken, baby! No way. And three times they asked and three times I said 'no'—(no one says no like Jonathan Harris; he puts such emphasis on the word that he makes it sound like an epithet: Noooo!)—"—up to and including a conversation with the director from London when he called. A very nice man, by the way. I met him at one of the New Line events—Stephen Hopkins. Lovely man. I liked him. And he called and begged and pleaded, which I thought was rather flattering, but I knew exactly what that was about. It's the publicity of 'Jonathan Harris is in the movie,' albeit fleetingly, right? He wanted me to do it, and I said, 'No, there's no way that I would do that because I feel very proprietary about Dr. Smith. I created him.' And I said, 'You must know, or you should know, I own him. I don't care who plays him. He's mine.' [Laughs] I don't know whether he liked that or not. It doesn't matter to me whether or not he liked it. I feel that way because he was nothing. He was not on a page. I did what I did, and I came to love him and I love him still, and I'm very proud of him. And so there.

"Gary Oldman is playing it, and he's a good actor. An excellent actor. I've admired his work, and I don't know what he'll do, but whatever he'll do it will be a good performance because he's a good actor. He won't do me, nor should he. Really, why should he? He'll do it, and if it works, fine, and if it doesn't, well, I'm so sorry. But it will have nothing to do with me, you see. And he will do his own, and so he should. But he's a splendid actor and a very innovative actor, and I wished him well, and I told Stephen Hopkins to extend my personal good wishes. And there you have it. I understand that he's a fan. Well, that's nice. I'm a fan of his! So there you are. I hope it's a big hit. It will be very good for me! And if it's not a big hit, it'll be very good for me, because I reap the harvest of the classic series, and that's delightful, and that's very good for me, you see.

"And really, I have to tell you, and I hope it doesn't sound ridiculous but those are three magical words to me—*LOST IN SPACE*. They really are, you know. I mean it's kind of magic—'Lost In Space.' My God, what it has done for me, and for that reason I hope it's a huge hit. Why not? That would be nice. And that's the way I feel about it." **James Van Hise**



A time portal sends the Space Family Robinson into the primordial past of the deserted planet.

main true to Akiva Goldsman's primary concern that the LOST IN SPACE notion is about family first. He continued, "Every big science fiction movie these days seems to be built around special effects. Ours has no shortage of spectacle and is combining effects elements in a way that no reasonable movie would ever consider. Here we have a CGI creature in the same frame as an animatronic Robot alongside a green screen on a stage designed to shake and tremble as the Jupiter II is hurling through space. Then we have the actors, some of whom are children! The only thing we haven't had to cope with over a very long five months is the weather."

He continued, "But at the centre of LOST IN SPACE is the survival and persistence of love between people who share the same blood. It's about how what we learn as a family unit becomes important even in the most hyperbolic and insane events. Big words for a movie where lots of CGI spiders are running around being shot at by laser guns! This will be a great roller-coaster ride, not only for your dazzled eyes, but also for your heart and mind. Everybody has been so dedicated in crossing this particular movie galaxy that it has been a joy to make. However, I am looking forward to the wrap afterglow, even though I know I'll regret the whole experience being over when that time actually comes." □



PRODUCTION DESIGN

Building a fanciful but functional future.

Norman Garwood (an Oscar nominee for designing Terry Gilliam's BRAZIL) started work on LOST IN SPACE in August 1996. He said, "Stephen Hopkins is a brilliant guy to work with because of his background as a comic illustrator and story board artist. He's very visual, like Terry Gilliam, but not quite so crazy. Stephen had an image of the future being this fabulously exciting place. The Robinsons are leaving Earth because its mineral wealth and fossil fuels are running out, and they have to find somewhere else to colonize. But Stephen still envisaged Earth as colorful and vibrant, despite the impending doom."

"Nothing was designed to look jarring or silly. That was Akiva Goldsman's *bete noir*—everything

had to have a purpose. You should walk onto the bridge of the Jupiter II and, although you don't know exactly how things work, it must all look believable. It was vital to Akiva that the actors felt entirely comfortable with the sets, too. They had to be at ease with the tasks they were supposed to be carrying out. He didn't want them fiddling around with weird knobs and buttons, looking non-plussed. So everything had to function in a non-fanciful way with its feet still firmly planted in a fantasy base."

Any reference to the old series, apart from a few well-placed design homages, was out of the question, Garwood revealed. "Stephen is an absolute comic buff, and his two heroes are Jack Kirby and Steranko. We looked at their '60s work and derived our own design style out of theirs. We wanted to

LeBlanc, Hurt, and Rogers stand before the full-scale mockup of the crashed Jupiter II that Norman Garwood built on the sets of Shepperton Studios.



give LOST IN SPACE a unique look—one you've never seen before. It's funny, but the last time I had the clear feeling of something distinctive evolving was on BRAZIL. That was a look that couldn't be categorized as anything but 'the BRAZIL look.' That's what has happened here."

The complexity of coordinating the job with the other departments, was "extremely daunting," said Garwood. He added, "Stephen, Verner Gresty [from Jim Henson's Creature Shop], visual effects supervisor Angus Bickerton, and I have had a hand somewhere in designing every aspect. I've never known a film where our departments have crossed over to such a large extent."

An example of the way certain areas of the design became a committee decision involved the Robot 1. Garwood said, "We all threw ideas around while Julian Caldrow did minimal sketches until we ended up with this eight-foot tall hulk. It had to look powerful while it was on the move and we styled and refined the look endlessly. It's this Robot which the Robinsons take into space to help them build the Hypergate. It's blown apart in a last stand with the spiders, and Will Robinson builds Robot 2 from the debris in the image of the Robot from the TV series that everyone knows and loves. We are all expecting a huge cheer in the audience when they first see the Robot's goldfish bubble head with lights whizzing around inside. Having to transform Robot 1 into Robot 2 meant the former's design was even trickier."

Providing a massive scale to



Left: LeBlanc, Oldman, Graham, and Hurt on Garwood's massive set for the derelict Proteus Probe. Above: LeBlanc on the bridge set for the Jupiter II.

the production was helped by Shepperton Studios. "They were in the process of finishing off building two new stages, J and K, on the back lot once used for JUDGE DREDD," said Garwood. "We asked if they would hold off putting in a dividing wall until after we had finished filming, so we could use the entire 260 feet by 150 feet space. That became home to our big planet set housing the crashed Jupiter II and was later revamped into another part of the alien landscape." The key to this impressive set was not to show the end of it in Garwood's estimation. He explained, "That way it looks enormous. Once you show any ends you put a scale onto it. So I added nooks, crannies and other interesting features not to give the distances away. I'm proud of the solid sense I gave to the sets. They didn't look comic book or cut-out even though they were the biggest ones I've ever had to build."

With regards to the time portals, Garwood had to revamp the planet set to give the impression of an alien winter, while three yards to the left of the same spot he had to suggest a hot arid atmosphere. He added, "The Robinsons rush through these time portals from the future into the past very quickly and the whole sequence is a very complex one. At one point they are walking through this sea of alien pods which spring into trees, then wither and die, and finally become swamp lands. That cycle will be shown digitally but I had to build a reasonably big section of them for close-ups. I took the tree look from microscopic photographic images of hair mole-

cules and dandruff. They are identifiably organic but with the weirdest shapes imaginable. It gives the film a further Irwin Allen-THE LOST WORLD feel."

He added, "Mission Control was another fantastic challenge. Those sort of interiors have been done to death in everything from the Bond films to APOLLO 13. It's always everyone sitting around in a semi-circle staring at a big curved screen with their sleeves rolled up. I tried to make that look cool, too. Or 'Cool and Very Groovy' as Stephen kept saying about the overall design tone. I used metals a lot and decided the

walls should be bronze and steel. It was a wonderful opportunity to be bold with the finishes. Stephen and I fiddled around and came up with a three circular window design. From that we evolved this huge set where people fly up and down on jet-powered seats. I'm really pleased with the Mission Control set because it's another big bold statement in a movie loaded with epic sweep after epic sweep."

Despite the usual moans of battles against time to get everything designed and built on schedule, Garwood confessed to LOST IN SPACE being one of the most rewarding design experiences of his career. "My budget was ample but we still had to revamp the eight Shepperton sound stages constantly to accommodate all our ambitious sets. For example, the Sick Bay—where Dr. Smith saves Judy

Robinson with some major medical machinery—worked for three other sets just by putting in walls and pulling out screens. It became the Robinson's bedroom and the Briefing Room. They were often just completed in time but that's part of the whole film-making process. LOST IN SPACE may be New Line Pictures' biggest project to date, but I haven't witnessed any nervousness on their part. They've seen everything, loved it and have been very complimentary to me in particular. They've trusted us to get on with it and I have nothing but admiration for the way they've handled everything and fully understood what we've been trying to achieve. Having no one breathing down your neck is a great way—correction, the best way—to make a movie."

Alan Jones

The Mission Control set. Said Garwood, "I tried to make it look 'Cool and Very Groovy,' as Stephen Hopkins kept saying."



LOST in

A retrospective of the

Irwin Allen is perhaps best remembered today for his disaster films (e.g., *THE TOWERING INFERNO*), but in the 1960s he was one of the most successful producers in television. He had created a hit TV spin-off of his 1960 motion picture *VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA*; and, wanting a follow up, he conceived another science fiction series: a futuristic version of the classic children's novel *Swiss Family Robinson*.

Veteran TV writer Shimon Wincelberg (*HAVE GUN WILL TRAVEL*) was tapped to script the pilot, which would shape and develop the series concept, which had been established before Shimon came on board. Because there was already a Gold Key comic book titled *Space Family Robinson*, he had to use a different title for the series. Ultimately, the idea was crafted into *LOST IN SPACE*.


"The bible for it had already been written and sold by Irwin Allen to 20th Century Fox," Wincelberg recalled. "I was brought in to write the pilot script, and the condition was that Irwin would collaborate with me and get half the credit, to which I agreed, being in no bargaining position. And I had a great time with it."

What Wincelberg wrote first was the unaired pilot, which did not include Dr. Smith and the robot. Shimon doesn't know why the decision was made to make the changes, but he does know how the Dr. Smith character was added. "Dr. Smith was something that a story editor named Tony Wilson thought

of. He said, 'You know what we really need here is a constant irritant to get the story started every week.' We kicked things around, and I think it was Tony who came up with the idea of a Long John Silver sort of character—a lovable scoundrel. And then I wrote the character into the [second] pilot." But Shimon wasn't around to see the transformation that Dr. Smith went through from villain to amusing rogue. "I think he evolved without any of us knowing where we were going, and I think he evolved in the right way because I believe that the three-year success the show had was due to a large degree to the relationship between Dr. Smith, the robot, and the boy. The adults, good as they were, weren't able to contribute as much."

After working on the two pilots and also writing the episode "Invaders From The Fifth Dimension", Wincelberg left the show because Irwin Allen became annoyed when he insisted that his pseudonym, S. Bar-David, appear on the pilot instead of his real name. "I was just being stuffy," Wincelberg admits now. "I had a quibble with Irwin Allen because, in order to justify his co-credit, he very honestly decided to do his share of writing on the script, and he changed a lot of my dialogue. I thought my script was very good as it was, and I said, 'Look, you can have the credit. I agreed to that contractually. But why do you have to louse up my script?'" (Perhaps more to the point, Shimon had a play set to open on Broadway, and he didn't want his name con-

BY JAMES VAN HISE



Above: the Jupiter 2 blasts away from the Earth and toward outer space in *LOST IN SPACE*, the fondly remembered camp '60's sci-fi show. Below: the cast (l to r): Mark Goddard, June Lockhart, Guy Williams, Billy Mumy, Angela Cartwright, Jonathan Harris, Marta Kristen, and, of course, the Robot.



SPACE

original sci-fi TV show.

nected to what he regarded as a kiddie TV show.)

In spite of this disagreement, Wincelberg has remarkably kind memories of the now-departed producer. "He had this wonderful, childlike enthusiasm. I think that other writers on the show have also referred to him as childlike, and they meant it in a nice way. It was just great fun to work with him. There were certain things that he was a little neurotic about. For example, when the show was about to be sold and there was the suspense—is CBS going to go for it?—he was biting his fingernails up to his wrists. I said, 'You already have a successful series. What do you care if they buy it?' And Irwin said, 'Shimon, you don't know my insecurities.' He was a very bright guy. But one of his neuroses was that once I took my name off the show, I became a non-person. Even though I liked him as much as ever, he couldn't forgive me for doing this to him. In fact, when the pilot was reviewed in the *NY Times*, they gave it a rave, and they particularly praised the writing of S. Bar-David. Irwin took out full page ads in the trades featuring the review of the writing, and I thought that was a very neat way of getting back at me because my name wasn't mentioned in it."

While *STAR TREK* featured a spacecraft that still looks futuristic thirty years later, Irwin Allen accomplished the same thing by having the Jupiter 2 designed to look like a flying saucer. The only other flying saucers on TV and in films in those days had been menacing alien spacecraft, but Allen figured that it was a good look,

and it helps keep *LOST IN SPACE* from looking dated. The ship was called the Gemini 12 in the original pilot and then retitled the Jupiter 2 for the series premiere.

The series was cast without a protracted search. Guy Williams had previously starred in TV's *ZORRO*, as well as in such films as *CAPTAIN SINBAD*. *LOST IN SPACE* turned out to be not what he expected. A third of the way through the first season, the emphasis shifted to Dr. Smith, Will Robinson, and the robot. The final episode of season one did focus on Williams' John Robinson and remains one of the series best (along with the third season "The Anti-Matter Man" in which Robinson encountered his other dimensional evil twin). People who worked on the series state that as Williams grew increasingly unhappy with his marginalized role, he'd regularly throw "temper tantrums" over the scripts. When the third season went into production, Williams was assured that the approach would change to feature other cast members more prominently, but that promise was soon broken. Following *LOST IN SPACE*, Williams found only sporadic work in Hollywood. Although approached by Disney to reprise his Zorro role in the 1983 series *ZORRO AND SON*, he rejected the offer after reading the scripts. The series was canceled after six episodes, so apparently he judged correctly. In 1986 he appeared with some LIS cast members on the game show *FAMILY FEUD*. He died in Buenos Aires on May 7, 1989.

Billy Mumy was a child actor making guest appearances in TV shows (including *THE*



The cast of characters in the original, unaired pilot for *LOST IN SPACE* (entitled "No Place to Hide") included neither the robot nor Dr. Zachary Smith.

TWILIGHT ZONE), but this was his first series. The lure of appearing in a sci-fi show went right to his heart, and he never regretted it. Will Robinson remained his most well-known role until he became a supporting actor on *BABYLON 5*. Interestingly, Mumy credits Guy Williams and the *ZORRO* series as his inspiration for becoming a professional actor when he was five years old. To work with Williams was very exciting for Mumy, and to this day he has nothing but praise for his co-star.

June Lockhart had appeared in an episode of *VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA* and enjoyed working with Allen because he was "dynamic and creative and so in charge of the work." When Jonathan Harris was contacted, he wasn't told exactly what the role would be like and so refused to provide clips of his previous work. Instead, he met with Allen in person and was cast without even having to read for the part.

The other cast members were Angela Cartwright

(*MAKE ROOM FOR DADDY*) as Penny, Marta Kristen as Judy Robinson, and Mark Goddard as Major West. Goddard, unlike Mumy, had no interest in doing a science-fiction series: "I resisted the offer for ages until [my agent David] Gerber said, 'Mark, do the pilot; earn a nice sum of money; and forget about it. Trust me, no one will ever see it.' Well, of course, the pilot sold, so I turned to Gerber and screamed, 'Get me out!' Unfortunately, they'd made him a producer at Fox in the interim, and I suddenly had a new agent. I was forced to follow through on the commitment, and to say I wasn't happy about it is an understatement. When I first put on my space suit—what I used to call my silver lame pajamas—and looked at myself in the mirror, I could have cried. I had no idea where to go as an actor with the Don West character, because the whole concept had no reality whatsoever in my mind. I couldn't get my imagination to make that important leap. Nor did I learn to love the show as we became more suc-

cessful. I was ashamed of it because I thought it was a kid's show that no-one ever watched. I thought it was the flop of my career at the time. It hasn't been until the last six years that a whole generation of people have told me how they grew up with the show, how much it meant to them, and how much it formed their lives. I've met fans at conventions who became fighter pilots, computer technicians, and science fiction writers because of the show. It has taken me a long time to come to terms with the fact that the impact the show had was positive while my attitude was so negative at the time. I don't knock it now like I used to. There was a time when I refused to include it in my resume. The disillusionment I felt was entirely my problem because I had a huge chip on my shoulder. I wanted to be Paul Newman. I didn't want to be Flash Gordon."

Dick Tufeld, who did the robot's voice, had worked with Allen years before on a radio gossip show; he had also been the narrator on Guy Williams' ZORRO series. In the first LIS episode, Tufeld's voice is also heard in Mission Control. Inside the robot suit was Bob May, who read the robot's lines during filming to maintain the proper timing in the scenes. The robot was designed by Robert Kinoshita, who had designed Robbie the Robot for FORBIDDEN PLANT (1956). Robbie the Robot would actually appear in two episodes of LOST IN SPACE. Kinoshita also designed the Jupiter 2.

When Tufeld tried out for the robot, he said to the producer, "I presume what you're looking for is a mechanical, robotian kind of sound?" According to Tufeld, "Irwin looked at me with horror and said, 'My dear boy, that is exactly what I do not want. What we have here is a very advanced, civilized culture, and what I want is a low key, laid back Alexander Scourby kind of approach.' Well, that was a great New York narrator and actor who has since passed away and who did many wonderful documentary narrations and who was very cultured. So I started reading for him, doing my best Alexander Scourby imitation, and he

"I thought it was the flop of my career," said Mark Goddard. "It's only been in the last six years that people have told me how much the show meant to them."



The Robinsons load the Chariot to move to a better climate when their planet's seasonal changes prove hazardous—a plot point ignored in later episodes.

would say, 'No, you're not getting it; try again.' After about ten minutes Irwin said, 'Well, this is not working, but you're still the narrator on the show, and we'll see you later.' I said, 'Irwin, let me try one more thing for you,' and I said something like 'Warning! Warning! Danger! It will not compute!' in my best mechanical, robotian kind of sound, and Irwin said, 'My God! That's that Alexander Scourby approach I wanted! What the hell took you so long?' Honest, I had to turn away from him because I was afraid I was going to laugh in his face, and I couldn't have explained what I was laughing about! Like all of us, Irwin said what he wanted, but what he really wanted was what sounded right to his ear. He described what he wanted, but when I gave it to him it didn't sound right. When he heard a mechanical robot sound, that sounded right in spite of what he said."

An on-screen blooper involving the robot can be seen in episode eight, "Invaders From The Fifth Dimension," if viewed on a TV screen which doesn't crop the image the way smaller sets do. At the conclusion, when the robot walks by some rocks, the legs of Bob May are visible. This is because the robot suit was so cumbersome that when possible May wore only the upper portion, and the robot would then be filmed from the waist up. In this case more was visible, although most TV screens crop the lower portion of the image.

The robot and Dr. Smith were added after the series was bought by CBS, when it was decided that the series needed more internal conflict. Footage from the unaired pilot (titled "No Place To Hide") is worked into the first five episodes, but it had to be

worked in around the new characters. Thus, after an argument in episode four, the Robinsons go off in the Chariot, leaving Smith and the robot behind. The footage involving the Chariot at sea and in the underground passages is all from the pilot, as is the sequence when they encounter a giant and blast it with a laser. The original pilot has so much action that it would have been almost impossible to maintain that level of spectacle on a weekly budget, so it wasn't long before the series settled down to stories involving the same sets used over and over again, redressed with props from Allen's other series or scavenged from the 20th Century Fox back lot. For instance, the diving bell used in VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA becomes the Jupiter 2's reactor chamber in episode twelve. In "The Lost Civilization", the sets of the Seaview turned up as interiors of buildings of a lost civilization. And the diving bells returned in a new guise as alien spacecraft a week later in "A Change of Space." The alien from that LIS episode then appeared on VOYAGE as a Man-Fish. An alien bird-man which appears in "Forbidden World" (episode thirty-three) was a costume used by the late Janos Prohaska in the "Amusement Park" episode of THE OUTER LIMITS and in the original Star Trek pilot "The Cage."

While shooting with the actors was generally done indoors, special effects showing the miniature Jupiter 2 model crash-landing on the planet was done in California's Red Rock Canyon near the Mojave Desert. Considering the barren nature of the unnamed planet, the setting was perfect.

The interiors of Jupiter 2 were constructed on two different stages, but through clever directing in "The Oasis," Maureen Robinson enters the elevator on the lower deck and seemingly in one shot travels to the upper deck.

Continuity was not an important consideration in 1960s television. Thus, a dog plays an important role in episode thirteen but is never seen again. A lost civilization in episode twenty-seven returns to sus-

LOST IN SPACE

OH, THE PAIN, THE PAIN...!

Jonathan Harris on playing the show's lovable rogue.

By James Van Hise

"Special Guest Star," a term used today on television shows to give special credit, was invented for Jonathan Harris. The Dr. Smith character became a key role for LOST IN SPACE, and owes much to Harris's hard work. The actor has appeared in everything from BONANZA (playing Charles Dickens) and VEGAS to SPACE ACADEMY and BATTLESTAR GALACTICA. But Dr. Smith remains not only the best-loved character of his fans but of Harris as well. "I have done 612 television [episodes], and of all the parts I have played, I must tell you that Dr. Smith is the one," he stated. "I love him. I own him. And if that sounds grandiose and pompous, I couldn't care less; that's the way I feel about it because I created him from the ground up. He was not on the page." Harris stressed the point, as only he can.

When it was suggested that it is unusual to see an adult character scream like a woman, Harris begged to differ. "The scream was not like a woman at all. The scream was total terror from Dr. Zachary Smith, and it's something that I came upon by accident. I kept it in because it was very, very effective and created quite a stir in the industry, and still does. I get mail about it, and when I'm on the television being interviewed people ask about it. I just did GOOD MORNING AMERICA, and Lisa McKree said, 'Give us one of your screams.'"—he laughed—"So I did! It was a good thing. I found many, many aspects for the gentleman, and I came to love him a great deal, and I love him still."

While Harris takes credit for the transformation Dr. Smith experienced, he also credits his producer with giving him the creative latitude to accomplish this. "I must tell you honestly that Irwin Allen did a marvelous thing by allowing me carte blanche to do anything I wanted, and that's the first and only time in a rather vast career (I say with great affection) that that has ever happened to me. He's the one—thank you, Irwin—who let me do that, really create a



In one of the show's silly plots, Dr. Zachary Smith tires to make money by turning Jupiter 2 into a hotel for alien guests.

character from the ground up. That's what I proceeded to do, and hopefully I didn't overstep the bounds. I created what I thought was a most interesting character, and I gave him many facets. I was allowed to do that, and so I exercised all the things I've ever learned about acting and actors and people, and out came this—I think—most interesting man who had a thousand aspects of his nature, cowardice of course being one. He was dreadful. He was charming. He was delightful. He was awful. He was sly. He was selfish, and delicious altogether. All of that I designed, you see, quite honestly plotted and planned, and it all worked and that made me very, very happy.

"He was a comedic villain, for which I am justly famous. I played many villains in my time, but the best of them for me have been the comedic villains because you're able to redeem yourself. And I did! I did dreadful things like selling Billy to the aliens periodically, but I always got him back. And the comedy aspect, which is very

close to my nature, melded and worked, for which I'm so grateful—you have no idea. Because easily it could not have, you know? But it did. And people turned on to it, and that made me very happy. It kept us on the air for 3 years, and we did 83 episodes, and there you have it," Harris added with a verbal flourish.

But where does such a characterization come from when it isn't in the script? "You have to pattern something on an image actually, and my image was all the kids I've ever known, including my own kid. And overall if you really think about it, of course I was very childish. I added to that a grown up point of view of a coward, of a sly, disreputable rogue and a rascal. It was plotted and planned by me. I'm a plotter and a planner as an actor because I think you have to be! It all worked because I became the first anti-hero in television to become the hero. Think about that, because I did. I never got punished. I got away with it, and I was the hero to all the kids who do get spanked and do get disciplined, as well they should. Somehow it all came together, and that was wonderful for me as an actor, because it was a marvelous stretch. I loved it. It's a kind of miracle, really, because I've done many villains and many characters; I'm a character actor, which is of course the best thing to be because it doesn't really matter what you get to look like—you can always work."

When asked the reaction of his co-stars to his over-the-top characterization, Harris prefers to stay away from that topic. "I'm not going to discuss that because I can't get into other actor's heads, and don't want to, and have no interest in so doing, and it's best to stay away from that topic at this point. All I know is that in every television series, and I have done quite a few, you see, there is something or somebody that sparks the imagination of the viewing public. In LOST IN SPACE, it turned out that I was it, and that's a fact, and the rest as we say is history. How that went down with other folks, well, I don't know anything about

that and it's none of my business. I had a great deal of work to do, and I worked my ass off! That's what I had to concern myself with because I've been around for a long time and I have very rigid rules of theatrical behavior which I've never varied and never will because they're good rules and good habits. I've applied them to all of my work, and if that sometimes means putting on a set of blinders and forging ahead, why we do that, too, you see. The important thing is the work, which is sacrosanct for me, and nothing must get in the way of that and nothing has ever done that because I never allowed it to."

The closest Harris comes to referring to any possibly negative reaction to Dr. Smith by his co-stars is his observation, "The camera can be a monster and photographs everything you're thinking. And if you are hostile, there it will be on the screen, and that's not very good. It's dreadful for the public. The public should not see any of that. The public should see a performance which they can turn on to and enjoy, because that's what we're about, we actors. We furnish entertainment, and sometimes it's hard, you see. But that's the nature of the business."

Harris is not at all reluctant to discuss the man in charge of it all, Irwin Allen. "He was a very, very interesting man, I've got to tell you. I had great regard for his expertise in the areas in which he functioned, which was floods and earthquakes and disasters. He was dubbed the Master of Disaster, and indeed he was! He did fabulous stuff like that, and he loved it. I think it was part of his charm, really, all of those explosions and floods and things. That was interesting to observe on a day to day basis. He was one tough cookie, my dear; he really was. But I had no problem with him because I established ground rules, and happily for me, and maybe for him as well, they worked. He was my boss, and that's how I treated him. I gave him the utmost respect and subliminally, without ever saying a word, I forced him to return the compliment because I was his star, and he did, although I never said a word. So we got along fine. I was treated very, very well as his star, and I gave him total respect as my boss. One has got to establish ground rules that make the work possible, you see. I was shooting twelve pages a day. That's a lot of work, you know. And I was learning 67 pages every weekend, Saturday and Sunday, and that's hard, too! But that's part of

"I remember what joy Billy and I had creating this relationship on screen," said Harris. "I was a terrible coward and he was so brave, which was wonderful."



Smith, typically, cowers behind Will as Zalto (Al Lewis) displays his magic in "Rocket to Earth." The doctor, the robot, and the boy became the show's stars.

the job, so I had no time for any nonsense or trouble. The important thing was the work, and it was fine for me. Allen had been around a long time and knew a great deal and exercised authority in many places where he shouldn't have. But he did all that, and the body of his work was extraordinary, I discovered. My God, how much that man had done!"

While unwilling to discuss his co-stars in general, Harris was more than happy to talk about his friendship with Bill Mummy. His affection and respect for Mummy is strong and enthusiastic, particularly in describing how impressed he was with the young co-star right from the start. "Eleven years old, and a wonderful actor. Really, my God, how do you get to be so good at eleven? But you have to remember that Billy Mummy did one of the all time great TWILIGHT ZONES when he was six years old! I mean, a staggering performance, and he was a divine actor to work with for me, and that was lovely. We worked beautifully together and developed a marvelous chemical reaction and professional reaction, and that was wonderful for the show and a great treat for me! I remember what joy we had creating this wonderful relationship on the screen. I was a terrible coward and always hid behind him, you remember? Because he was my protector! Which was a lovely idea when it came to me. He was so brave, and I was so cowardly, and that was wonderful

for the relationship. It's wonderful when you can establish a real professional relationship with another actor so the work is better. It's a two-way stretch because the work is better for the both of us, and so it was with Billy and me, I think."

Even after LOST IN SPACE was canceled, Harris' friendship with Bill Mummy continued. "I saw him just the other day—we had lunch! We always continued to meet. We talked on the telephone, and we still do. We're very close, you know, and that's wonderful. He's married and has two lovely children and a charming wife. But what we had was very special. I was kind of his mentor, you know? God knows he didn't need it because he's such a good actor. Something he once said to me will remain in my memory and never leave. I think it was in the second season. He came into my dressing room shuffling his feet and I said, 'What is it?!' He said, 'I just want to tell you something. You taught me more about acting in one year than I ever learned in my whole life,' and he shuffled out. That's one of the nicest things that was

ever said to me, and it made me feel good. So we're still very close with each other and I hope it continues. Why shouldn't it? We had a wonderful professional relationship, and why should that die? It would be terrible."

Of the humorous direction in which he took the show, Harris said, "I've been accused of playing Camp. So what! It's a marvelous thing to play because it works. What is Camp? It's outré. It's above and beyond, and it's interesting to watch, and it's marvelous, but based on the truth, you see. The secret is to play the truth. That's the only kind of acting there is. It's got to come from something real. That was the way that man was, you see. And the fact that he got away with it to the point that he maybe believed he was doing everything right, that was very much part of his nature, too."

Harris added, "I was brought up on the stage, thank God, where you have four weeks of rehearsal and you can find aspects of the character you're playing. Then when the curtain finally goes up, it's a full-blown character which the audience can relate to and say that's a real person who has certain terrible things about him and certain wonderful things about him. And Smith was a real person, too. He had all these things going, you see, but he was real, I think. And that's how you play anything—for reality, for the truth. That's the way I feel about it. I may be wrong, but it's worked fine for me." □

ended animation at story's end. But when the Jupiter 2 has to flee the planet before it explodes at the beginning of season two, their friends in the caverns below are forgotten. In season two, they land on a planet where they befriend a hermit in one episode. Later, when they have to flee the planet before a comet destroys it, no one suggests that the hermit might appreciate a lift off.

Contrary to popular recollection of season one as being fairly serious, the humorous adventures of Dr. Smith, Will, and the robot began as early as episode six ("Welcome Stranger") when Warren Oates, dressed as a cowboy named Jimmy Hapgood, landed on their planet. Footage of his spacecraft liftoff, as well as the craft itself, would turn up again and again in the series. The first season didn't fall entirely into the cartoon antics of seasons two and three, however, as some adventurous change-of-pace episodes did crop up, including "Return From Outer Space," wherein Will activates an alien matter transmitter beam and briefly returns to Earth. In spite of the fact that Mummy was featured more prominently in the series when it became campy, he disliked the change. He credits Jonathan Harris for coming up with the changes in the Dr. Smith character. "Originally, he was supposed to be killed off in the sixth show, but from looking at the mail, his popularity was so strong that they had to change their plans," Mummy recalled. "It was really his choice, which I never understood be-



Irwin Allen's decision to opt for a flying saucer design has prevented the Jupiter 2 spaceship from dating badly.

cause no one else was able to dictate the course that the show would go, but Jonathan did. I hated to see it get to where he was just a babbling buffoon, but the sillier he got the better our ratings would score."

LOST IN SPACE had a variety of interesting guest stars worth noting thirty years later. Kurt Russell, then a child star, appeared in "The Challenge." Michael Rennie (THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL) appeared in the two-part "The Keeper." And John Carradine appeared in "The Galaxy Gift."

The series was black and white in its first season but went to color with season two. Unfortunately, that season also features its silliest episodes. When season three began, an attempt

was made to try different kinds of stories, and while silliness still cropped up in the series most infamous episode, "The Great Vegetable Rebellion," the season also included "The Anti-Matter Man," one of the rare episodes which allowed Guy Williams to take center stage and give a serious performance. Another very good third-year episode is "Time Merchant." Bob and Wanda Duncan were regular contributing writers to Irwin Allen shows, and their script for this one is quite inventive. When Dr. Smith escapes back through time, he actually becomes himself in the hours before the Jupiter 2 is set to launch in 1997. In yet another twist, we learn that had Smith not sabotaged the Jupiter 2, it would have been destroyed by an uncharted asteroid. Black-and-white footage from the pilot is used on a monitor screen, and continuity is actually followed in that the pre-take-off sequences in 1997 featuring the robot have it speaking in its unemotional monotone from the early episodes before the voice became more personalized.

The show was actually renewed for a fourth season, but CBS decreed that this would only go through if they could pay less for the show than they did in season three (which had been less than they'd paid for season two). Having accepted a

cut in price for the series once, Allen refused to comply again, so CBS "unrenewed" the show.

In the '70s LOST IN SPACE returned for a brief run as a Saturday morning animated series. In 1982, Bill Mummy wrote a script for a revival, but Irwin Allen rejected the idea, stating that, if LIS was revived, he alone would write it. By 1991, Allen had a change of heart and made plans to meet with Fox, but he died before the meeting could take place.

Shimon Wincelberg's estimation of LOST IN SPACE more than 30 years later? "I'm astonished," he admitted. "I thought it was just another kiddie show, of no great consequence, and that it would be aired and forgotten. I was amazed at the way it became a cult hit and at how people thirty years later still remember it. I've written a lot of television shows, and I never get any fan mail or interviews about them, but I constantly hear about LOST IN SPACE. I'm delighted, of course, but I'm also really bewildered." Looking back on what it was like to craft the series, Wincelberg explained, "One thing people should not forget: it is very hard to do a good kiddie show—to get yourself into that frame of mind. Irwin just had a knack for it, and I admire that." □

Mark Goddard interviewed by Alan Jones.

FORBIDDEN PLANET's Robby the Robot, in a guest appearance as a villain, squares off with the show's Robot. Both were designed by Robert Kinoshita.



DARK CITY

Designing a future world—and what lurks beneath its surface.

On a sunny day in Playa Vista, outside the aging Hughes buildings where—inside—Godzilla no doubt was preparing another city-destroying rampage for his big-budget comeback film, Patrick Tatopoulos spoke of a second dark film, Alex Proyas' **DARK CITY**, on which he had served as production designer.

In the film, malevolent beings called The Strangers alter people's brains, changing their very memories in a perverse experiment to isolate the essence of personal identity. Indeed, the city of the title is no city at all, but a

bizarre spaceship on which The Strangers have placed their subjects—so that they may learn to manufacture human-style lives for their own pathetic, alien selves. It is the shocking revelation of the true nature of the Dark City of the film's title that furnishes a cornerstone moment in the drama.

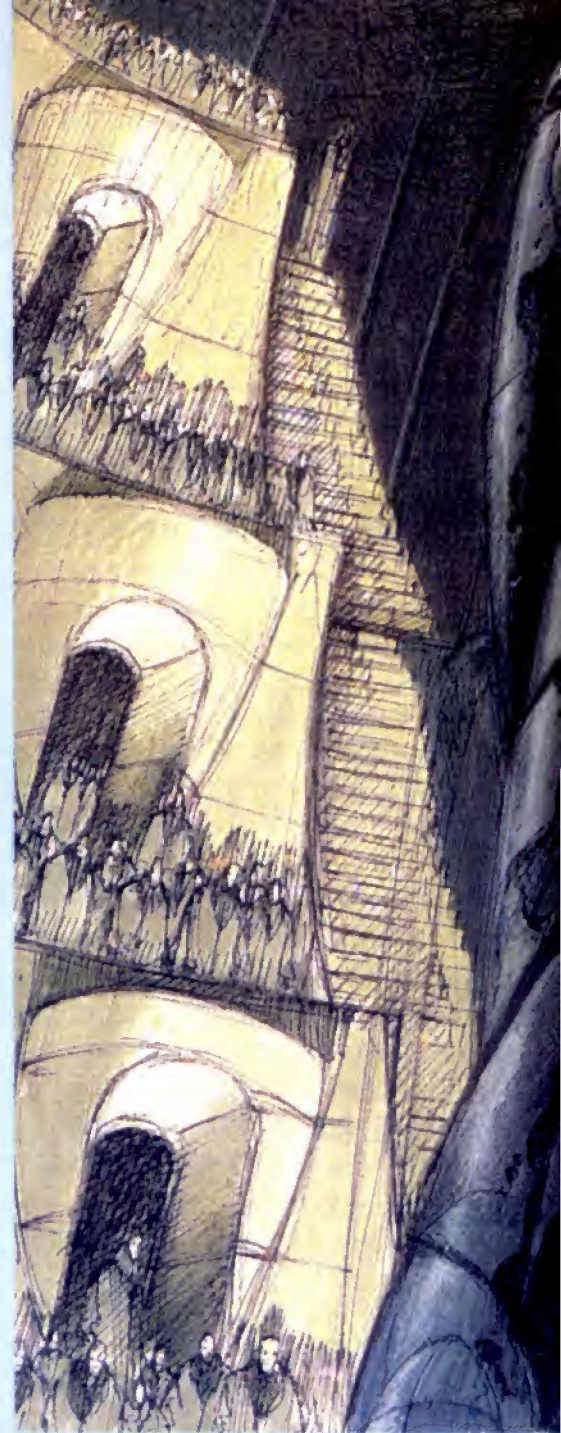
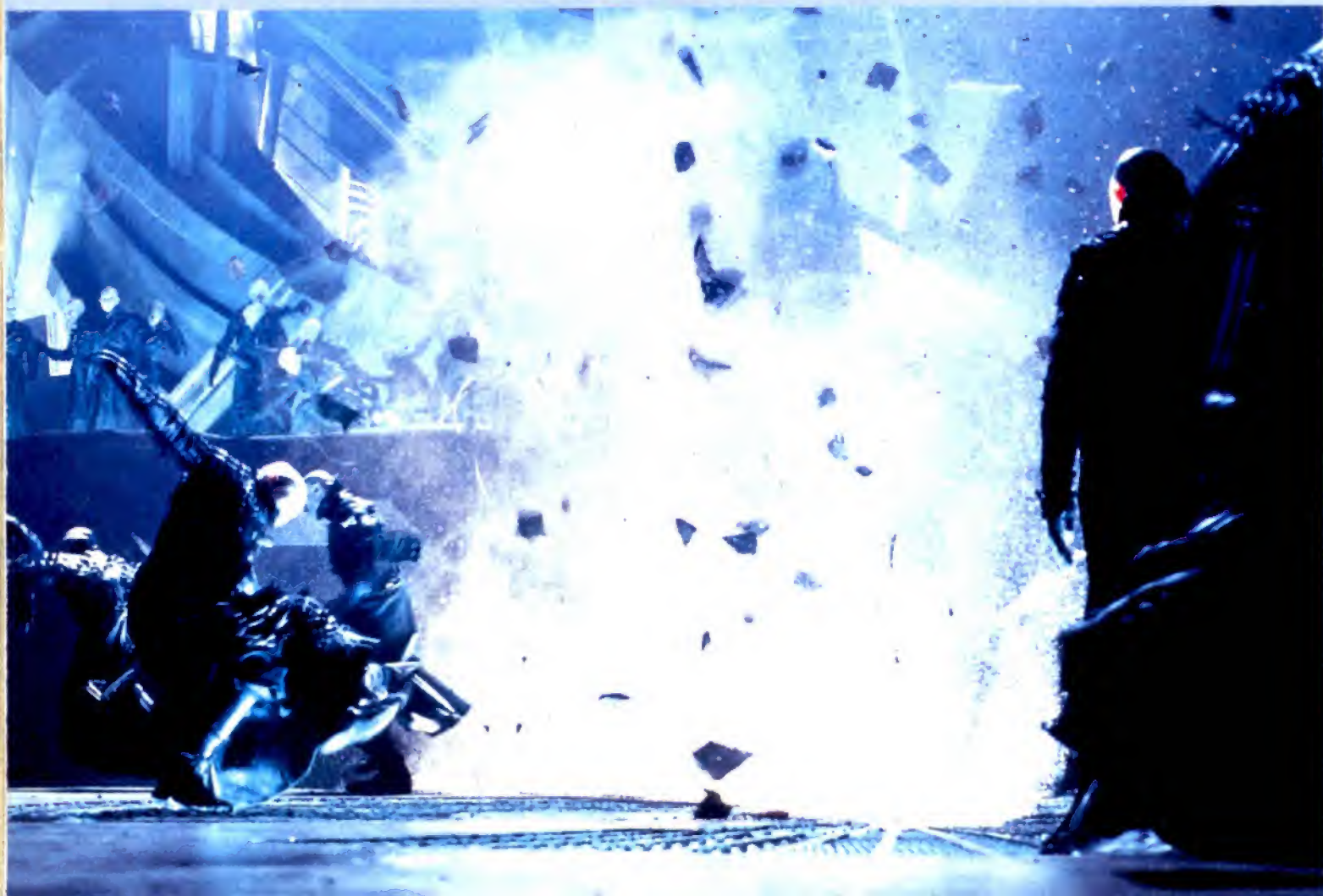
"The original concept came completely from Alex," said Tatopoulos. "Alex is fascinated by spirals and other elements like that. He wanted a city that looked like a spiral—some sort

of a maze. The city is not a real city, per se, but a fake world—even the shape of it. Just to make it more futile and fake, we didn't want to create a planet shape. We wanted to create some sort of dish. The Underworld of The Strangers is underneath, constantly controlling the city. It's a living organism, a living structure that controls the city, which is a fake set."

This is a constant theme of **DARK CITY**: a fraudulent surface masking the truth; a fake city with a living world beneath. And within the Underworld, a clock that stops human time is

by **Chuck Wagner**

The Strangers' lair undergoes a fiery cataclysm at the film's climax.



concealed behind a human face. And The Strangers are not really humanoids at all; rather, their appearance is a facade concealing the real nature of the beings living within the bodies of dead humans.

"They're entities," Tatopoulos said, attempting to explain the reality dwelling inside each of The Strangers. "They're hiding behind that dry shell of a human-looking thing. They're not bugs. We started thinking of bugs for the creatures at the very beginning, and just backed up, thinking, 'We've seen bugs everyday, everywhere.' We went to a concept of energy. An energy being that moves into a body that can move and touch and do things. Alex called me and said he wanted something like an energy that kept re-powering itself, re-creating itself, re-shaping itself, sitting inside a dry piece of human shape."

Not that **DARK CITY** is a film about walking corpses; in fact, the revelation of how Mr. Hand, Mr. Book, and the other Strangers came by their human



Top: Patrick Tatopoulos's design for the underground lair of The Strangers in DARK CITY. Left: the full-size set, including a face hiding a clock that stops time.

forms is actually downplayed, because that wasn't the point. It's what goes on inside the human subjects that holds our interest. A brief line of dialogue clarifies the point, in order to avoid confusion, and that's all.

In addition to unusual characters, DARK CITY contains some of the most original use of traditional stagecraft seen in a recent film. The Strangers' underworld lair is a vast amphitheater centered on a human bust which hides a massive clock and a spiralling device which alters city structures on whim.

"Alex wanted to have a real, mechanical feel," Tatopoulos explained. "Obviously, we had limitations on the size of it, but we still built a gigantic piece which was about, if I recall, fifty feet tall. But then on top of that it was to keep growing, and from the top of that the city would grow out. Obviously, there we had to use CG techniques as well as mechanical

techniques. But for the base—the core—Alex really wanted something mechanical to portray the twisting and pulling of city elements."

Fifty feet in height? A large studio set is thirty-six feet, on average. Just where was this filmed? "We were filming this in a large fairground building in Sydney. It was really, really gigantic. But we needed the space as in DARK CITY the sets were huge."

On a budget of \$30-40 million—and without multi-million dollar superstars salaries—it can be possible to do a lot. Said Tatopoulos, "It's hard for me to say things about the budget because we worked in Australian dollars and shot over there, but we had a decent budget, but nothing extraordinary. I mean, after doing ID4, there was nothing special about the amount of money.

"The thing that is important," he continued, "is that most of the people working in





Below: Tatopoulos's design for the "vortex" illustrates *The Strangers*' ability to meld new cityscapes with the power of thought. Above: Rufus Sewell turns the table on *The Strangers* after realizing that he has acquired their power.



Australia on this movie are very creative people. They find ways to make—cheaply—some extremely amazing elements. For example, we created that underworld with canvas stretched onto welded metal frames. The guy who came up with it was one of our sculptors. When I first came up with that look in the design, it was easy to translate into canvas. Things like that don't cost much money. We would glue elements of form onto the canvas and then cut it out to give it that rugged look. Everything was built very light, and very cleverly, I think."

The lair of *The Strangers* includes a rail conveyance, which did look expensive. "Again," Tatopoulos said with reassurance, "very clever ways of dealing with that. We had, obviously, a car built, but we had just one built. We laid some rail for it to ride on. We made a section of corridor that we kept driving through all the time, and you end up believing this thing is running along forever."

Originally, Proyas wanted a lot of things to look at as the rail car rolled along. "You'd look to the right and see a gigantic amphitheater, or something: mechanical rooms, storage rooms, etc. This was abandoned, but we used replaceable elements and strong design textures from set to set and accomplished the feeling anyway. Ultimately, movies don't need to be that extremely expensive. Also, Alex had to spend money on digital effects, so we had to be careful and not go crazy on sets so that budget would ultimately be covered."

The results—and skills—of the moviemakers are evident. "Since I've come to America," Tatopoulos concluded, "there have been two personal favorites of mine. Creature-wise, *Godzilla*. *Godzilla* is like my alter-ego in some ways. I really identify with this character.

"Production design-wise, though, *DARK CITY* is the one I love. I really hope this movie does well, because we put in so much energy and had a great time doing it. I'm sure with Alex, this will look great." □

DARK CITY

REVIEW

An ambitious attempt to meld film noir and science fiction.

DARK CITY

New Line Cinema Presents a Mystery Clock Production of an Alex Proyas Film. Produced by Andrew Mason and Alex Proyas; executive producers, Michael DeLuca, Brian Witten. Directed by Alex Proyas. Written by Proyas, Lem Dobbs & David Goyer. Music, Trevor Jones. Editing, Dov Hoenig, A.C.E. Production design, George Liddle, Patrick Tatopolous; art directors, Michelle McCahay, Richard Hobbs; set design, Axel Bartz. Cinematography, Dariusz Wolski, A.S.C. Visual effects supervised & produced by Mara Bryan, Arthur Windus, Andrew Mason; visual effects director, Bruce Hunt. CGI by DFilm Services. Key makeup, Lynn Wheeler; prosthetics, Bob McCarron, Ric Connelly. Costumes, Liz Keogh. 2/98. 105 minutes. Rated R.

John Murdoch.....	Rufus Sewell
Doctor Schreiber.....	Kiefer Sutherland
Emma Murdoch.....	Jennifer Connelly
Mr. Hand.....	Richard O'Brien
Inspector Frank Bumstead.....	William Hurt
Mr. Book.....	Ian Richardson
Mr. Wall.....	Bruce Spence

by Steve Biodrowski

"I think; therefore, I am," said DeCartes, in his attempt to find a basic principal of complete certainty, an unshakable foundation on which to build his philosophy. No matter what else one may doubt about the universe—even the evidence of one's own senses—one could never doubt the basic fact, "I am; I exist."

However, even when one accepts this inescapable conclusion, the question remains: Who am I? This question of what constitutes individual identity has long been a part of the horror and science-fiction genres. The horror of *Dracula* is not so much that he will kill you but that he will turn you into a hideously distorted mirror image of yourself ("Lucy Westenra, but yet how changed," remarks Dr. Seward in *Dracula*, upon seeing the resurrected vampire). The irony of *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* is that it's not bodies that are being snatched but personalities; and if what you are can be duplicated, then are you really the individual you imagine or only a sum total of certain characteristics? Films derived from the work of Philip K. Dick (*BLADE RUNNER*, *TOTAL RECALL*) have postulated that one cannot be sure of one's own identity when the memories that make up that identity may be only implants.

After *THE CROW*, director Alex

Proyas apparently brooded long and hard on this last possibility, giving rise to his latest opus, *DARK CITY*. In the film, John Murdoch (Rufus Sewell) awakens in a hotel room with a murder victim and no memories to tell him whether or not he committed the murder. Following a trail of clues, he tries to track down his identity. The twist, however, is that the trail is a false one created as part of an experiment. The Strangers, aliens possessing human bodies, are searching for the secret of individual identity (which they do not possess, being of a group mind). Working from the premise that identity resides in memory, they have forced a human doctor (Kiefer Sutherland) to implant memories into people, to see whether they will then act according to their recalled identities. To facilitate the experiment, the Strangers are capable of "tuning," i.e., altering the physical world to conform to whatever the subjects are injected to believe about themselves.

Thus, the *Dark City* of the title turns out to be no city at all but the Strangers' self-contained laboratory in space. As a result, there is no sunshine, and the characters are only slowly crawling toward the realization that none of them have recent memories of daylight, only dim childhood recollections. This revelation provides some impressive imagery, making a worthwhile payoff to

the foreboding hints dropped throughout the narrative, but the real focus is ultimately not on the place but the people, particularly Murdoch. The question was: if he were given memories of a killer, would he then commit murder? Although his implants failed to work, there is still evidence to make him doubt himself, and the interest of the movie lies in his search for the truth.

This is where the film takes a big gambit that ultimately pays off. Starting with an amnesiac character makes it difficult to establish audience identification—it's hard to relate to a guy when you don't know who he is. The result is that for the first half hour Murdoch's quest engages the intellect more than the emotions, while visually overwhelmed by the production design and cinematography. Yet, as the story progresses, the pieces of the puzzle fall into place, and we gradually realize that the film is not a murky muddle of visuals propping up a weak story. All the questions lead to answers, and the answers make sense within the fantasy framework. The script (co-written by Proyas with David Goyer and Lem Dobbs) leaves the ultimate answer cleverly defined only by what it is not. Murdoch tells Mr. Hand (the Stranger who has taken the implant meant for Murdoch and become the murderer Murdoch was meant to be) that the

Kiefer Sutherland, as a doctor collaborating with the enemy, injects one of The Strangers with memory implants intended for Rufus Sewell's character.



William Hurt's police officer examines the room of a colleague who has gone mad thinking his life and memories are only an illusion.

Strangers were looking in the wrong place, the mind, for the center of identity. Where they should have looked remains unsaid, allowing the viewer to fill in his own answer, whether it be the soul or the heart.

Proyas has put together a worthy follow-up to his debut feature, one that is stylistically consistent with its predecessor while tilling new thematic ground. The story lacks the basic hook that guaranteed success for *THE CROW* (it's hard to beat revenge from beyond the grave), but it is ultimately a more thoroughly consistent piece of work. The two best roles go to Sewell and Richard O'Brien (as Mr. Hand), but the rest of the cast do serviceable work with what's available. Ian Richardson is impressively creepy as the apparent leader of the Strangers; Sutherland manages to gain sympathy for his double-crossing doctor; and Connelly makes you believe she could inspire love, no matter what the manufactured details of her alleged past. One only wishes that William Hurt had been given a little more to do; he fits well into the role of film noir detective, but the focus of the story maintains his character as a fly in the ointment for Murdoch—until both men realize that their roles as cop and criminal have been manufactured for them.

At the finale, Murdoch, who has evolved the Strangers' power for tuning, changes *Dark City* to a *City of Light* and goes out looking for his supposed ex-wife (Connelly)—even though she has been given a new identity and no longer remembers him. The implication is that, whatever their memories, something in-

continued on page 61

THE POSTMAN

Kevin Costner's second post-apocalypse is sunk by WATERWORLD backlash.

By Dan Persons

Hollywood giveth, and Hollywood taketh away. That's what the residents of Metaline Falls learned when Kevin Costner and crew turned up to film portions of *THE POSTMAN*, the post-apocalyptic action-adventure film that Warner Bros. opened on Christmas Day, 1997. While the townspeople watched in awe, the construction team began what looked like a major reconstruction of the community. Imagine the townies' surprise when they discovered that, in the movies, camera reality takes precedent over urban renewal. "First of all, we put tops on their buildings," explained production designer Ida Random, "and we repainted it. It looked really good, and everyone was really excited. Then I started aging them, and it got dirtier and worse-looking, and then they were going, 'Oh, this is...you know, this looks bad.' They would have liked to have kept our sort-of-new tops on, but they were just made for the film."

If it was a shock for townspeople to see their buildings undergo accelerated aging, a number of horse-owners were greeted with a different surprise when Costner & Co. requested that their steeds experience a major makeover before serving as mounts for the film's survivalist bad-guys, the Holnists. "We were shooting in Arizona," said costume designer John Bloomfield. "I knew we were gonna have at least two-hundred of these guys riding across the desert, and I wanted a really clear look, which is how their



Kevin Costner went back behind the camera to direct *THE POSTMAN* because he was attracted by the originality of the story adapted from David Brin's novel.

orange uniforms developed. I was thinking, *Well, what complements orange is black*, and so I *really* wanted black. We were getting these 're-enactors'—these people who re-enact the battles of the Civil War, who were really into the whole period look—and what I wanted was to get this very interesting image of the orange and then all the guys on black horses. I reminded Kevin of a couple of shots in *ROBIN HOOD* where we had these evil guys [on horses] up on the hill, and there were some whites and some grays, and it just, from my point of view, destroyed the picture. So I said, 'Why don't we try to have black horses?'

"Now it's very difficult to get two-hundred black horses. These guys were turning up with their paints and their dapples and their grays, and we persuaded them to dye all their horses. We were in Tucson when we started this, and we

had two-hundred horses. We used something like four-thousand bottles of black hair dye. I couldn't believe they actually did it, but they were so enthusiastic about getting this look that all these re-enactor guys did it. The result was a nightmare for those poor guys, but they did it. And they kept it up, because, of course, horses shed. It doesn't hurt them, though. It hurts the *rider*, 'cause he's the poor guy who's doing it. Those re-enactors always had black hands. They didn't need the gloves I gave them."

Of course, civvies might have been a little taken aback by the demands that a major (\$80 million) feature film extracts from its participants. For his part, producer Steve Tisch (who was joined in the role by Costner and Costner's partner, Jim Wilson), professed no surprise at the length of time it took to get *THE POSTMAN* underway. "I first read the nov-

el, *The Postman* [by Hugo and Nebula award-winner David Brin], in about 1985, thought it could make a great film, and set it up at Warner Bros. It's taken twelve years to come to the screen, but in my opinion it was well worth the wait. I waited nine years to get a movie called *FORREST GUMP* made, so waiting is not a hardship, especially when—in the case of *GUMP*—the result is a picture seen by millions and millions of people. In the case of *THE POSTMAN*, [it will result in] a picture that'll also be seen literally around the world."

Even with all the faith in the world, it took those intervening dozen years and a couple of script drafts (one by Eric Roth; another, more satisfactory, version by Brian Helgeland) before Kevin Costner committed to the project. "You're always looking for the original story," Costner admitted. "You're always looking for something that, somehow, resonates with you, not necessarily what you think is going to resonate with an audience. It has to start with you. If you're going to be in this storytelling business, then you want to try to tell a story that hasn't been told. You're looking for something original. As a storyteller, you're looking for that, and [*THE POSTMAN*], while it had aspects of stories I've enjoyed, was told in a very original way. You almost don't explain what you're doing in your life other than the very simplistic idea of, 'I liked it, and I wanted to share it.'

Of course, the vision of a loner in the post-apocalyptic Northwest who revives Ameri-

A N



The opening sequences portray Costner's unnamed nomad wandering through the deserted post-apocalyptic world—sort of a visual antonym of WATERWORLD.

can society by donning the jacket of a deceased postal worker and picking up the man's mail route wasn't solely Costner's to give. There'd have to be co-stars, and, as in many of the actor's previous films, they didn't necessarily have to be above-the-title names. Actress Olivia Williams, who plays love-interest Abby, was a case in point: "We kept looking for the right woman," said Costner, "and we saw so many great ones. And it got down to a couple, and you never know if you're right. But I wasn't wrong about Olivia. The first thing that attracted me to Olivia was her smile. I saw a tape; I wasn't particularly impressed with the tape, and what was cool was that she wasn't either.

I saw it in the end, when they cut: she looked at the camera, and she just smiled that smile of, *Man, I could do better than this*. And that smile was mesmerizing to me."

Remembered Williams, "Actors do these [auditions] all the time where you're in a dingy office somewhere in London. You're handed a piece of paper, and there's someone with a small camcorder, and you read the scene with a [receptionist] from the office playing Kevin Costner (which she did extremely well, I'd like to say). I really forgot about it because it seemed so unlikely. Astonishingly, a month later Kevin rang me at home in London and said he'd liked the video and invited me to come out to Los Angeles

and audition again. I said, 'Yes,' as I think most actors would. I came out and had a very bizarre twenty-four hours with being driven to a hotel in Los Angeles and being met for dinner by Kevin, who talked me through the script. Then the next morning I was wheeled in in front of the producers, and I acted with Kevin for a couple of hours. By lunch time, the job was mine. By three o'clock that afternoon I was in wardrobe being fitted up for my costume; by seven o'clock I was having dinner in Mortons. It happened very, very quickly."

It was probably the quickest thing to occur in a production that stretched over three states and encompassed locations that included a Holnist base camp set at the bottom of a massive open-pit mine, and a three-story "Bridge City" built along the side of the Metaline Falls dam. "When we first were conceiving the film," said Ida Random of the latter set, certainly one of the film's most spectacular, "it was like, if a war happened right now—some kind of chemical war—and things went crazy, you'd try to understand what people would do. Kevin and I talked about it, and we decided that they would run and hide in places that seemed safe, like power-plants, or something that had some structure left. In the script, there was something called Bridge City, where peo-

ple are living in a bridge, and I thought that would be the most difficult thing to find.

"When we saw this dam—Boundary Dam—up outside of Metaline Falls, it was just so different-looking. I said, 'Gee, this'd be a great Holnist camp.' But Kevin said, 'No, this would be a great Bridge City—we'll put the buildings here,' so it was perfect. I thought the bridge would be the hardest thing to find, but we found it first."

In the end, Bridge City turned out to be an immense, three-story structure stretching across the wall of the dam, with the home of the city's mayor (played by Tom Petty) surmounting all. ("You'll notice the Mayor has a little bit bigger house than the other places," Petty would brag to visitors. "But it's rent-controlled.")

"We went to Seattle City and Light, which owns this plant," explained producer Jim Wilson. "We explained to them in rough terms what we imagined we could do. At first, they sort of scratched their heads; they couldn't imagine actually building a three-story structure that spanned the entire dam. But we went ahead and we took it step-by-step. They loved the notion of bringing a film up to this part of Washington, because we're in a very poor country right here; a great deal of people are on welfare. The mayor got involved, and the governor; all

Bethlehem (an excellent Will Patton) leads the Holnists, a well organized militia that effectively thrives unopposed amidst the anarchy and chaos of the future.



THE POSTMAN

REVIEW

Wipes out WATERWORLD.

THE POSTMAN

A Warner Bros release of a Tig production. Produced by Jim Wilson, Steve Tisch, Kevin Costner. Director, Kevin Costner. Director of photography, Steven Windon. Editor, Peter Boyle. Production designer, Ida Random. Art director, Scott Ritenour. Set designer, Thomas Betts, Susan Lomino, James Murakami, Bill Taliaferro, Derrell Wight. Sound, Kirk Francis. Special visual effects, Cinesite, Sony Pictures Imageworks. Music, James Newton Howard. Screenplay by Eric Roth, Brian Koppelman, based on the novel by David Brin. 12/97, 177 mins, R.

The Postman.....	Kevin Costner
Bethlehem.....	Will Patton
Ford.....	Larenz Tate
Abby.....	Olivia Williams
Idaho.....	James Russo
Sheriff Briscoe.....	Daniel von Bargen
Bridge City Mayor.....	Tom Petty
Luke.....	Scott Bairstow
Bandit #20.....	Giovanni Ribisi
Irene March.....	Roberta Maxwell
Getty.....	Joe Santos
Ellen March.....	Peggy Lipton

by Steve Biodrowski

WATERWORLD was far from being a sophisticated piece of cinema, yet the film (essentially a waterlogged remake of THE ROAD WARRIOR) survived on the sheer power of its action set-pieces, which were some of the most elaborate ever filmed. Kevin Costner's follow-up, THE POSTMAN, seems to be the star's way of showing WATERWORLD's helmer, Kevin Reynolds, how to direct a post-apocalypse film with action and heart.

Actually, the two film share only the most basic similarities: in both, Costner plays a nomadic loner who learns to put aside his self interest to become a hero. Apart from the location, what sets the film apart from

In many ways the real hero of the film is Ford (Larenz Tate), who takes it upon himself to set up a local postal unit after being inspired by the Postman.



Unaware that he is not what he pretends to be, Abby (Olivia Williams) is won over not by what the Postman represents: the possibility of a new order.

its immediate predecessor (and from most other examples of the form) is a basic idea inherited from David Brin's novel. Whereas most post-apocalypse films are centered around a hero who brings order out of the chaos by kicking ass when necessary and showing an occasional hint of sensitivity and vision, THE POSTMAN portrays its titular character as decidedly non-heroic.

The nameless nomad initially dons the postal uniform merely as a ruse to get a better welcome at the next village. However, what he rep-

resents (a return to order, an end of isolation, renewed contact between separated friends and family) inspires the people he meets so that they elevate him to the level of a symbolic figured head, a role he is not eager to fill.

The result is that whatever authority the Postman seems to have does not proceed from above but below. He has no power structure to enforce his will on others; rather, a popular movement grows—inspired by him but proceeding without his direct involvement. Eventually, of course, the consequences force him to live up to what people expect, but the transition is handled slowly and carefully.

Despite the film's poor critical and financial reception, Costner's handling of the material is admirable. His casting choices and handling of actors is on par with DANCES WITH WOLVES, and he manages to achieve an epic scale that almost sustains the film's nearly three-hour running time. Maybe there was only room for one lengthy epic last Christmas (that being TITANIC), but THE POSTMAN deserved a better response. It's sad that Costner once could make a dud like THE BODYGUARD that would earn \$100 million. Now, when he turns out something good, it bombs. □

on welfare. The mayor got involved, and the governor; all the officials said, 'Fantastic. Anything we can do to make this happen, do it.'

"In the state of Washington, we probably spent at least \$8 million in the local economy. And that's \$8 million that goes directly into the pockets of the citizens. I have more crew from Washington than I do from Los Angeles or New York."

What this variegated crew helped create was a vision of the future that had rarely been portrayed on-screen. While Random had initially designed her settings with colored skies and a more stylized look, Costner sought a more naturalistic portrayal: "It could be done in a very dark way," said Random, "bunkers and, you know, very sparse and kind of scary. But we also had to contend with the fact that we didn't want it to be like MAD MAX or WATERWORLD, 'cause it's not really the same kind of movie at all. It has real heart, the story, and it's about the mail and how important it is and how they don't know anything about it and the kids end up wanting to be mail carriers. It's not a MAD MAX type of film, but when you're dealing with that kind of thing—things rusted, things gone—you tend to get the same look. We had to be careful."

Care as well had to exercised in the way a New Millennium mailman presented himself. Explained John Bloomfield, "The Postman had to be believable as a postal carrier, so I changed the uniform. I've pushed it and [assumed that], after the millennium, there had been a redesign of the American postal uniform, which is my design. That's the thing he finds, and that's what he wears. It doesn't actually relate to what postmen wear today, but is recognizable, generically, as something that could be that."

"I wanted to be sure that he looked heroic. That was probably the overriding thing: to make certain that he looked really good. I don't want to say that the postman's uniform now doesn't look good, but it isn't a heroic thing. So it's quite difficult to have something that is an everyday uniform and then make it so that when he walks





Before adopting the guise of the Postman, Costner's nomad wanders the desert, searching for his next meal.

something *exciting*." Audiences, unfortunately, did not respond with the same level of enthusiasm. **THE POSTMAN** had a weak opening on Christmas day, logging a mere \$5.3 million. Unaware of the troubles ahead, the film's principals were guardedly optimistic about the reception that would greet their work. Said Steve Tisch, "I think when this picture is seen by people who love movies, it will clearly be one of the biggest productions ever to hit a movie screen. And I hope

that the audience appreciates the scope, the scale, and the sheer power that this story has to take on to become a very effective movie. It's a very powerful story we're telling about people living in a world that is not right for a lot of reasons we're all too aware of. And I think Kevin has to tell the story with the scope, the magnitude, and the size that we decided to support him with."

Said Costner, "I think films have to have a heartbeat. If you're going to fight in a

movie, you have to have something to fight for. If you're going to kill somebody, there has to be a reason why. If someone's going to have to die, it must hurt. I think movies, if they're going to be of a dramatic nature, cannot be casual.

"You don't make a movie by yourself," the actor-director-producer continued. "It's obvious that the pressure falls on me, but it should also be obvious that you don't do these things alone, that you have really good people trying to help



you. And these guys, these women...sometime when the light was running out, they could do their lines. James Russo [who plays Idaho] did that for me one night, and he always *thought maybe I'd shorted him*, like, 'Ah, he only gave me one take.' But I was so proud of him, because I really needed him to nail this take in one, because the sun was going away. We were never going to revisit that scene again. And he hit it.

"It's so funny, the director-actor relationship, you know. I have my partner of, I don't even know how many years now, Jim. And if I was ever confused or whatever, I could look to Jim at least just to talk with him. I wanted to do this movie, and nobody that's around the set can underestimate that. Hopefully, they get swept up in my excitement and my passion to formulate this movie. I'm very excited about this being their best performance. I'm very excited about making this their best film experience. I'm very excited that they can look back and say this was the best movie they were ever in.

"I don't know that it will be that. But that is the process. That is the goal." □

The Holnists move in to wipe out the new opposition inspired by the appearance of the Postman.





ALIEN EFFECTS

Recreating the aliens for French director Jean-Pierre Jeunet.

Above: ALIEN RESURRECTION uses computer-generated imagery to bring the aliens back to life. Below: In one of the film's highlights, the aliens skillfully adapt to an underwater environment, swimming like iguanas and attacking like alligators. Bottom: a grenade takes out one of the underwater aliens.




It's hard to believe it's been eighteen years since we first learned that "in space no one can hear you scream." Those portentous words, together with the foreboding image of an alien egg ready to burst, were our introduction to Lieutenant Ripley, the Nostromo, and the H.R. Giger-designed Alien—now one of the cinema's greatest incarnations of terror. The ALIEN films not only set a standard for other-worldly horror; they raised the benchmark for stylized special effects. While STAR WARS provided a comic book vision of an Arthurian myth, and STAR TREK attempts to create a vaguely plausible view of our

own future, the ALIEN series, starting with Ridley Scott's 1979 film, offered a truly blue-collar, industrial take on life in space. Here the gadgets were futuristic, but they still broke down, and the working stiff bitched about over-time.

The latest entry in the ALIEN mythos, Jean-Pierre Jeunet's ALIEN RESURRECTION, brings a French sense of the absurd to the franchise. Jeunet's previous films, including DELICATESSEN and CITY OF LOST CHILDREN, delight in the magical and microcosmic. Helping Jeunet realize the film's numerous effects sequences was Erik Henry, co-FX supervisor along with Jeunet's longtime friend and collaborator, known simply as Pitof.

Henry's string of credits extend from THE BLOB to THE ABYSS (which received an Academy Award), plus TOTAL RECALL and BATMAN RETURNS. When producer Bill Botalano called about the fourth ALIEN film, Henry knew it was a career-making opportunity. "To say I was a fan is an understatement," he said. "I read the script, and it was great. I just remember Ridley's version was the first film where I had to cover my eyes in some scenes. It had an incredible impact—as much as STAR WARS. The characters were great; the suspense is wonderful. I'll never forget the most suspenseful scenes are where you never see the alien at all."

ALIEN RESURRECTION is Henry's first film as FX supervisor. In the rapidly chang-



The familiar H.R. Giger design is resurrected for the new film, but inexplicably, the name of the Swiss surrealist is nowhere to be found in the credits.

ing world of special effects, the supervisor acts as a kind of general contractor. They work with the client (the producer and director) to determine the needs of the film, then hire and supervise the sub-contractors, ranging from model makers to matte painters and computer animators. Henry and Pitof roughly divided the responsibilities in half. "We had [in Jeunet] a French director who spoke no English. Pitof is a longtime friend of his and there was no question who would be on the set. Pitof had the experience on *CITY*, and the two of them had a short hand that is so valuable—you can't discount that. So that left me with the miniatures, which was just as big a shoot happening simultaneously. We equally supervised everything in post. I may have had a little more to do with the American companies and he with the French companies." Both VI Effects and the New York-base Blue Sky Productions were tapped for the computer animation, as was the French company Du Bois, who had worked on Jeunet's *CITY OF LOST CHILDREN*.

The first task was to break down the script into effects sequences and work with the director to understand the style he

was looking for. For *ALIEN RESURRECTION*, Jeunet insisted that a man in an alien suit would not do. Anytime the aliens are seen in a wide shot, they would have to be created with computer animation. Men in suits would only be used for close ups. Jeunet and cinematographer Darius Congi also wanted to achieve a fresh look for the scenes involving the *Auriga*, the 12,000 foot long vessel on which 90 percent of the film takes place. Rather than replicate the hard, single-light source of the earlier films, Congi wanted to fill in the shadows on the ship so detail could be seen.

Model construction commenced on both a real-world and digital level. As Ian Hunter and Mathew Gratzner (of Hunter Gratzner Industries) began construction of the *Auriga* and the pirate ship, the *Betty*, the computer animators at Blue Sky took detailed scans of newly sculpted maquettes of the aliens, created by ADI. The traditional alien warrior is featured once again, as is the alien Queen seen in the Cameron's sequel. A new addition to the fold is an alien known as the Newborn—a genetic mutation based on both

alien and Ripley DNA.

As principal photography commenced on the Fox lot in Los Angeles, Henry began shooting miniatures in nearby Santa Monica. Congi's technique of rim lighting the models took advantage of a new Technicolor developing process popularized by director David Fincher's film *SEVEN*. "We looked at all the movies we could find," said Henry, "and none had the look we were going to do. Darius said, 'Let's do something different so it isn't so stale.' He wanted us to wrap the ships in light rather than have the old hard light from the sun casting dark shadows. He wanted to see the details. Using the E & R process at Technicolor is something Darius likes to do. It's another black and white bath the film print goes through. It pumps up the black. As long as you over-expose areas in shadow, it compensates for the overexposure and gives you a great look. You get detail, and it's not washed out. It makes the miniatures really pop out in this movie."

In the new digital world of visual effects, the various elements of a particular shot are no

longer optically composited, but digitally married together. As a result, not all elements must be photographed on motion picture film. In several sequences, Henry had miniatures or matte paintings photographed on large-format Hasselblad still film, digitized into the computer, and composited in Photoshop. One sequence involved the space pirates—among them Winona Ryder as the feisty Annalee Call—moving cargo from the *Betty* to the *Auriga*. "There is a little peer this boat is floating by, held in place by magnets, and there is a walkway they cross over," explained Henry. "We shot them on the walkway green screen and then composited that into a still image of the their ship, the *Betty*, inside a cavernous space in the interior of the larger ship, the *Auriga*. The background wall was a high-resolution matte painting. We decided we would use it for several angles in the film, and when we blow up on it and use smaller parts we didn't want it to get grainy and lose focus. Then lights were animated in post to give the matte painting some life, and smoke was shot on black and added to the painting details."

By far the biggest challenge of *ALIEN RESURRECTION*,

BY DALE KUTZERA

ALIEN RESURRECTION

REVIEW

A worthy heir to the original.

ALIEN RESURRECTION

A 20th Century-Fox release of a Brandywine production. Produced by Bill Badalato, Gordon Carroll, David Giles, Walter Hill. Co-producer, Sogourney Weaver. Director, Jean-Pierre Jeunet. Screenplay, Joss Whedon, based on characters created by Dan O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett. Camera, Darius Khondji. Editor, Herve Schneid. Music, John Frizzell. Production design Nigel Phelps. Visual effects supervisors, Pitof and Erik Henry. 10/97, 108 min.

Ellen Ripley.....	Sigourney Weaver
Annalee Call.....	Winona Ryder
Johner.....	Ron Perlman
Vriess.....	Dominique Pinon
Elgyn.....	Michael Wincott
Gediman.....	Brad Dourif

by Patricia Moir

"Sequels suck," complains a character in *SCREAM 2*. They're "all about money and no one's interested in quality." That observation is all too often true of the genre *fantastique*, in which even the most inane, marginally successful releases have been known to spawn countless spin-offs. Perhaps the only franchise to escape the curse of ever-diminishing returns is the *ALIEN* series, which, thanks to clever screenwriting and the commanding presence of Sigourney Weaver, has maintained the standard of excellence established by the Ridley Scott original. *ALIENS* and *ALIEN 3* are far more than attempts to reproduce a winning formula. Each approaches its basic premise from a distinctive angle, transforming Scott's classic horror movie first into an action-thriller and then into an ambitious spiritual allegory. The character of Ripley has also grown with each new film; in particular, her role as both a literal and a symbolic mother figure has been developed with uncommon intelligence.

For the franchise's current *RESURRECTION*, Joss Whedon (*BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER*) has come through with a thoughtful and engaging script which builds on the themes of the earlier sequels while taking the action in an entirely new direction: military scientists clone both a new, somewhat alien Ripley and an alien queen with unanticipated genetic modifications of her own. These two, along with the queen's offspring, are joined by a late-model android designed entirely by machines and given to acts of morally motivated rebellion against her human masters, thus rounding out a trinity of new and distinct species, all of which have human qualities without being exactly human. It's a

brilliant concept, one which liberates the plot from the expected Ripley vs. Monster configuration and allows for the development of complex interrelationships between its characters.

Of all the *ALIEN* films, Whedon's comes closest to being classic science-fiction, with its focus on moral questions related to technological development and the future of the human race. Like *The Company* before them, the futuristic military show little concern for ethics in their pursuit of the perfect weapon, cold-bloodedly sacrificing human lives to their experimental creatures and endangering the population of their own planet in the bargain. Luckily for the inhabitants of Earth, their creations show a good deal more humanity than their makers. The scene in which Ripley discovers the misshapen bodies of her unsuccessfully cloned "sisters" is easily the most heart-wrenching scene on film all year, and speaks volumes about the moral gulf between the human and non-human characters. Even the aliens themselves prove to have redeeming qualities: they're still monsters, but this script endows them with intelligence, complex motivations, and a deliciously malicious sense of humor. The alien act of self-sacrifice that frees the creatures from their experimental prison provides a startling contrast to the self-serving actions of their captors, and their endless endeavors to ensure the preservation of their species make the military's indifference to human life seem all the more monstrous. Like *FRANKENSTEIN* and *BLADE RUNNER* before it, *RESURRECTION* suggests that the human species is not morally or intellec-

After delivering a load of human hosts to the top-secret military installation, a crew of space pirates find themselves aboard a ship loaded with aliens.



A new Ripley, regarded as a waste by-product by those who cloned her in order to reproduce the alien she was carrying, is kept under lock and key.

tually prepared to play the demanding role of Creator. Ripley, with her genetic heritage of alien ruthlessness, and the android Call (Ryder), programmed for pacifism, make unlikely but effective allies against both the military's mad scientists and the aliens infesting the ship.

Weaver does a magnificent job of portraying her character's dual nature, investing her usual physical grace with an oddly sinuous quality and reacting to the other characters with convincing ambivalence. Ryder is engagingly fragile as a misfit struggling to define herself in a world where she has no counterparts. And the marvelous Ron Perlman brings unexpected depth to his otherwise one-dimensional character, showing us glimpses of a ferocious loyalty and compassion beneath Johner's crude mercenary exterior. Unfortunately, the human villains lack this subtlety. Dan Hedaya is miscast as the military project supervisor, bringing an air of comic ineptitude to a role which requires cool brutality. And Brad Dourif, whose talent shines in non-speaking

scenes, cannot save his character from the inane mad-scientist dialogue when Ripley finally meets the alien queen. Here, the film's greatest misstep occurs when the character-driven plot is eclipsed by visual extravagance. The scene should have been a communicative encounter between the two test-tube "twins." Instead, we are given an impressive but seemingly endless view of the queen's lair, in a sequence that it requires a narration from Dourif's captive Gediman to make any sense at all.

The optimistic ending suggests yet another new direction for the series. One can only hope that any further sequels will continue to explore the promising themes of human identity and moral responsibility introduced in *RESURRECTION*. □

however, was the creation of a CGI alien that looked and moved believably with the right weight. "It has been done," noted Henry. "Creatures have looked incredibly real—look at JURASSIC PARK. So we knew it wasn't impossible. We wanted it to have the right mass; the skin had to have the right texture; and it had to match with an alien we would see in close up. Then the best challenge of all the shots the script called for, was for the alien to swim underwater. From the get-go, we knew a man in a suit would not work. He would be clumsy at best."

Another of Jeunet's directives was that the aliens would be as comfortable moving in water as they are in air. The fact that the creature could adapt so effortlessly to a new environment would make it all the more terrifying. The sequence would be complicated by the fact that the actors would be filmed on the practical set, not against a blue screen. To up the ante even higher, the camera would not be locked down—those days are long gone—but would be handheld. The computer animated aliens would have to be seamlessly matted into the live action plate. The compositors responsible for the digital rotoscoping process even had to consider the bubbles from the live action actors as they rose up and crossed over the matted image of the chasing aliens.

At Blue Sky, animation director Jan Carlee, technical director Mitch Kopelman (responsible for lighting and skin texture), and producer Christopher Scollard had already completed a digital model of the alien and, working from storyboards, began generating wireframe and low-resolution shaded animations. No high-tech motion-capture system was used. Henry noted the difficulty of adapting the movement of a human in a motion-sensor suit to an alien creature with limbs of different lengths and joints in different places. Likewise, the use of a motion-capture puppet, a technique used in the film SPECIES, can result in a movements that do have realistic weight and mass. Instead, Blue Sky animated the creatures the old-fashioned way, using key frames for each movement in a

"We looked at all the movies we could find, and none had the look we wanted. [D.p.] Darius Congi wanted us to wrap the ships in light; he wanted to see details."



Co-visual effects supervisor Erik Henry supervises a digital composite.

shot. "I knew motion capture could be faster, but from the outset we knew this creature did not have a lower body like a man. If the creature doesn't have similar joints then they have to be key framed anyway."

The first movements for the creature were repeated movements such as walking, climbing, and swimming. The walking and climbing motions were based on that of the previous films, but for swimming, new paradigms had to be devised.

"What will he swim like?" Henry asked. "I came up with the idea of having it attack like an alligator, where they really kick the tail and it gives it the propulsion that slams it forward. We definitely did that. Then Jan [Carlee] came to us with a couple of videos of creatures swimming—National Geographic sort of things. One creature had this great swimming action, back and forth, and Jean Pierre said, 'That is great.' It was a Sea Iguana. That was used as the basis. The alligator reference was when he was attacking, but so many of the shots called for him to play cat-and-mouse. Not only did the director want us to believe he was much more menac-

ing, because of his adaptability to water, but he also felt that he would play cat-and-mouse, knowing well that he would pick off these slow humans one by one."

Each shot was roughly animated, using a virtual set. Pitof and Henry would review each shot and provide notes. With each iteration, the animation would become more refined and eventually rendered at higher resolution. "We would go through 20 versions for each shot," said Henry. "There were different considerations—whether it worked with the story, whether we believed its weight and speed through the frame, the composition—all of those things we worked through when we saw those animations. Jan once told me for every iteration we saw, he saw twenty. So you can imagine they were doing these things over and over. The animation was spectacular, some of the best I've ever scene."

In the extended underwater sequence, which lasts almost nine minutes, the aliens move with slippery ease. The weight and presence of the creatures is perfectly wedded to the underwater setting. Where computer

renderers can improve surface texture and light reflectivity of a creature, movement still comes down to the animator's discerning eye. Based on several sequences viewed on a Avid editing system, Blue Sky's work in this department is flawless. Blue Sky uses Alias Wavefront software, as well as their own proprietary animation and rendering software.

Several techniques were used to further marry the digital aliens to the live action environment. Milk was added to the water to give it a visible atmosphere (the scenes were filmed in a specially built tank on stage 16), and a corresponding digital fog was added to the animation so that the aliens came into clearer focus as they approached the camera. Digital objects were added for the aliens to interact with, and a rippling vortex was added to the shot as the aliens swooshed by. The animators even added tiny bubbles of water coming off the alien skin, although the aliens themselves exhale no bubbles (Jeunet felt it would be too human.) The most complex shot of this sequence involved the destruction of one alien who is blasted away with a grenade launcher.

"That explosion is a practical explosion," explained Henry. "Eric Allard's special effect guys rigged a black wax alien on a rod and set in the pool. Then riding in on two black wires is a CO₂ canister made to look like a grenade launched from a gun. It rides in right to the alien's nose and—Boom—explodes this thing. The explosion was big, like an earthquake, but it was the smallest charge he could put in. Needless to say it was one take."

The final shot was a composite of the live action plate, the live action explosion, and a background plate from the same camera position. "We used the clean plate for the first part of the shot where the two aliens are swimming towards us," continued Henry. "Then at the right moment in comes the grenade, and we cut to the composite of the explosion and the second CG alien goes away. You see parts of it flying. The first [CG alien] is blasted forward by the concussion just beautifully." □

CINEMA

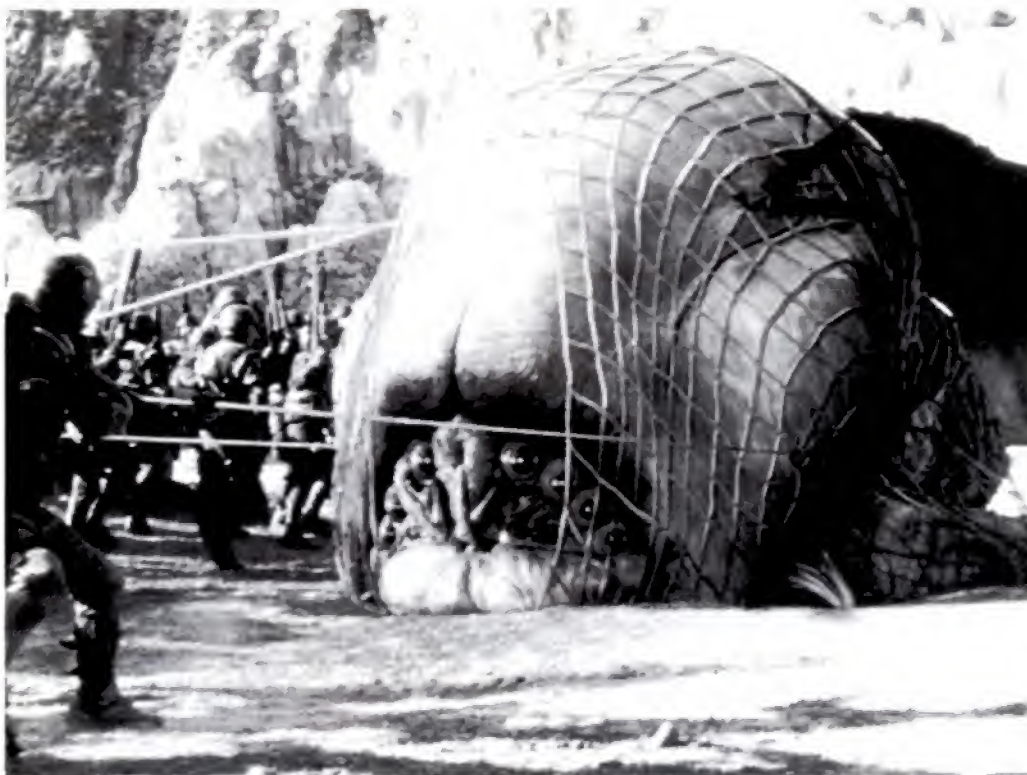
By Steve Biodrowski

A YEAR OF FANTASTIC FINANCIAL FLOPS High quality brings only middling success to the genre.

As each year draws to an end, most magazines and newspapers rush out with their Top Ten lists, eager to weigh in with an opinion about why the year was so lousy. Because of the reality of deadlines and lead times, this rush to judgement sometimes has bizarre results (as, for example, when *Sci-Fi Universe* magazine did a year-end round-up that omitted all the film's from the year's end—the magazine having gone to print before any of the December release came out). At *Cinefantastique*, on the other hand, we like to take our time and wait until Oscar season has everyone once again looking back at the best of last year's cinema. Hopefully, this results in a more thoughtful assessment on our part. More practically, it gives us a chance to observe how badly other critics have botched the job.

As usual, the pundits lamented the alleged lack of quality among last year's offerings—a failure in perception that is absolutely amazing when you consider the variety and quality of films released in 1997. Unlike 1996, which was heavy on sound and fury signifying nothing (*ID4*, *TWISTER*), last year featured a variety of genre films that appealed to widely different tastes. Whereas in previous years I found it necessary to include nu-

Despite its abysmal critical and commercial reception, *THE POSTMAN* is a fine piece of work.



STARSHIP TROOPERS was the best genre effort of the year—a big-budget Hollywood film that had not only effects and action but also some clever underlying themes.

merous borderland efforts, obscure releases, and even reissued classics just to fill out the Top Ten, this year was filled with new high-profile releases that were also of high quality. (This doesn't mean I've omitted the borderland and obscure efforts, just that you'll find them comfortably nestled alongside Hollywood studio efforts.)

There is one sour note amongst the news: many of 1997's best films were far from being the most successful. (This was true even outside the genre: the year's best film, *LA CONFIDENTIAL*, had barely crept toward \$40-million by year's end.) In particular, audiences seemed dissatisfied with satirical efforts that undermined conventional Hollywood histrionics; a sophisticated, witty take on a subject never did as well as a straight-ahead generic approach. No doubt this will result in fewer adventurous choices in the future, with filmmakers sticking to the gung-ho patriotism of 1996's *ID4* rather than the clever subversiveness of *STARSHIP TROOPERS*.

THE BEST

1. *STARSHIP TROOPERS*, like James Cameron's *TITANIC*, showed what Hollywood could do at its best: provide all the production value and spectacle that money can buy, while anchoring it to a solid piece of storytelling. Director

Paul Verhoeven, working from Ed Neumeier's adaptation of Robert Heinlein's novel, created an exciting epic that exploited audience appetite for armed combat while subtly undermining the very mind-set that makes such violence seem noble. Most critics (and apparently many viewers) saw only a special effects show filled with giant bugs, but this was actually a tremendous achievement in science-fiction filmmaking, one whose reputation is bound to grow over the ensuing years.

2. This slot is almost a toss-up between two limited releases from well-known genre auteurs: David Lynch's *LOST HIGHWAY* and David Cronenberg's *CRASH*. Ultimately, I'm opting for the Lynch vehicle, for the simple reason that all the demented darkness of the film actually results in a certain giddy joy—like the rush of adrenaline from a brush with danger. Again this was an effort underrated by critics, who saw only a rehash of familiar Lynchian themes; what they ignored was how expertly orchestrated and synthesized those themes were. The film may have lacked the shock value of *BLUE VELVET* (by now, we expect Lynch to be weird), but it is as fine a piece of work.

3. If *LOST HIGHWAY* felt like

narrowly avoiding an auto accident—frightening but exhilarating at the same time—then *CRASH* was like *being* in an auto accident. David Cronenberg's relentless precision in this film is truly remarkable—in fact, almost scientific. His characters are trapped in a stifling ennui in which their souls are so deadened that the only means of reviving any sense of sensation is through body-rending car collisions (rather like Trent Reznor's lyric for the Nine Inch Nails song: "I hurt myself today, to see if I still feel; the needle tears a hole—the only thing that's real.") The Bill Pullman and Patricia Arquette characters in *LOST HIGHWAY* were suffering a similar emptiness, but Lynch allowed them a form of escape—if only into madness and fantasy. Cronenberg, on the other

hand, offers his characters only an inexorable descent into greater masochism.

4. *VOLCANO* was another unfairly neglected effort. Far from a typical disaster film, it took the elements of the genre and twisted them into a comedy in which we were encouraged to laugh at the destruction of L.A.'s more garish icons even as we cheered the characters rising to the task of defeating this apparently inexorable assault of nature. Even if you aren't amused by the vicarious thrill of seeing Los Angeles trashed, the special effects are fun; the pacing is incredible; and Tommy Lee Jones provides enjoyably deadpan reactions to the chaos around him.

5. *THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE* tried to bring back a sense of serious menace to the horror genre, one in which the stakes were not merely life-and-death but damnation-and-salvation. Unlike the majority of temptation-themed flicks, this one actually charted a character who sells his soul by inches—until the only way out is a desperate act of self sacrifice—and made you see how he could be blinded by ambition and affluence. (Conversely, a disaster like *WISHMASTER* portrayed a demonic djinn with whom no one in his right mind would traffic, and yet the idi-

GENRE OSCAR PICKS

The Academy Awards are approaching, and once again science-fiction, fantasy, and horror films are being under-represented. It's old news, we know, but as long as it remains true, we'll continue to do our best to rectify the situation. As with last year, we are not picking winners but recognizing efforts that deserve a nomination. Therefore, not all categories are listed; if there were no worthy contenders, we omitted the category. Academy rules apply: a film must have opened in 1997 and played a one-week continuous run in Los Angeles.

Picture

No genre pictures surpassed L.A. CONFIDENTIAL, but three of them are at least in the same league: STARSHIP TROOPERS, CRASH, and LOST HIGHWAY are all worthy of a nod. If there were any justice, these four films and TITANIC would fill out the roster.

Director

Paul Verhoeven, David Lynch, and David Cronenberg were all in top form last year. Working on a studio film, Verhoeven's contribution to STARSHIP TROOPERS may not have been quite so large as that of the other two, who were helming more personal projects. Between the two Davids, Cronenberg's work may have been slightly more impressive, because of the difficulty of the subject matter.

Original Screenplay

David Lynch and Barry Gifford's script for LOST HIGHWAY was widely dismissed for being too confusing; nevertheless, it does provide the foundation from which Lynch fashioned an excellent film, filled with clever bits of dialogue and characterization. Really, the only reason people were confused is that the script offers no simple explanations: had some TWILIGHT ZONE-type miracle worker shown

The makeup for WARRIORS OF VIRTUE allowed smooth mobility and effective lip-synch dialogue.



THE FIFTH ELEMENT's imaginative imagery deserves a nod for art direction.

up to turn Bill Pullman's character into Balthazar Getty, the film would have been much easier to understand but also far less intriguing.

Adapted Screenplay

Ed Neumeier's work on STARSHIP TROOPERS deserves a mention for updating Heinlein's questionable ideas by cleverly skewering them. David Cronenberg also did a splendid job adapting CRASH; the script is at once faithful to J.G. Ballard and yet also very clearly a part of the Cronenberg oeuvre.

Actor

There were many excellent performances last year: John Travolta and Nicolas Cage were great in FACE/OFF, and Al Pacino and Keanu Reeves gave the Devil his due in THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE. James Spader in CRASH and Michael Douglas in THE GAME also did impressive work. It's a toss-up, but Douglas was on-screen for the whole film, and that's a challenge.

Actress

This category also featured several fine performances. Sigourney Weaver found new depths for a new Ripley in ALIEN RESURRECTION. Jodie Foster movingly showcased passionate commitment to exploring the universe in CONTACT. But my favorite had to be Molly Parker in KISSED—an in-depth portrayal of a necrophiliac who believes she is helping dead souls find their way to the other side (now that's an Oscar acceptance speech I'd love to hear!)

Supporting Actor

Robert Blake's Mystery Man in LOST HIGHWAY blows the competition away. The role is miles from anything he's done before, yet the actor seems right at home in the Lynch universe—menacing, uncanny, and even (in a demented way) amusing. This career redefining performance, albeit brief, is one of the film's highlights.

Supporting Actress

This category has no stand-out performance, but Deborah Kara Unger made an impressive debut in CRASH and proved that was no fluke in THE GAME. Charlize Theron also did good work in THE

DEVIL'S ADVOCATE: her psychological disintegration encapsulates almost the entirety of REPULSION into a subplot that is both frightening and heart-rending.

Foreign Film

TETSUO 2: BODY HAMMER was attacked by some for its flashback exposition; despite this, the sequel was a worthy follow-up that expanded on TETSUO 1 with better production values, without losing the anything-can-happen feel of the shot-on-a-shoestring original.

Art Direction

The best thing about THE FIFTH ELEMENT was that it looked great. This is the best filmic realization of a future cityscape since BLADE RUNNER.

Cinematography

There was good work on view in THE GAME and ALIEN RESURRECTION, but even more impressive was LOST HIGHWAY, a film noir so dark that it was almost black—but only almost, there always being a trace of light to separate the silhouetted characters from the dark backgrounds.

Editing

The Bond films had been growing a bit flabby over the years, padding

In FACE/OFF, John Travolta and Nicolas Cage offered two excellent performances, as a cop and a killer who trade faces.



the running time past two hours with ever more car chases and explosions. TOMORROW NEVER DIES reversed the trend; editors Dominique Fortin and Michel Arcand deserve a nod for bringing the series back below 120 minutes.

Makeup

There were lots of impressive monsters on screen, but the makeup most worth recognizing is Tony Gardner's in WARRIORS OF VIRTUE. The title characters—covered in prosthetic suits—could not only execute martial arts moves with fluid grace; they could also talk with amazing lip-synch dialogue.

Dramatic Score

The music for STARSHIP TROOPERS was rousing, but even better was Howard Shore's haunting score for CRASH. Never have reverb and phase effects done so much to make arpeggiated chords linger in the ears so memorably.

Sound

David Lynch's own sound design for LOST HIGHWAY is more than audio filler. Combining synchronous effects, ambience, original score, and existing music, he created a perfect aural accompaniment for the mysterious images on screen.

Visual Effects

Technically, there were many films of distinction last year. The opening shot in CONTACT was worth the price of admission; THE LOST WORLD gave us better dinosaurs and more of them; MEN IN BLACK made the alien and the unusual seem believably matter-of-fact. But the film which utilized special effects most integrally was STARSHIP TROOPERS, in which the alien warriors become not just an impressive technical achievement but an absolutely integral part of the film. The battle scenes are epic and elaborate; more than that, they are convincing and terrifying in their brutality. These are effects that truly have a tangible effect in the film and on the audience—something often lacking in CGI extravaganzas. □



otic characters keep falling into his trap!). Keanu Reeves gives his finest performance to date (don't snigger—it's good, solid work), and Al Pacino deliciously modulates his familiar persona into the role of the Devil, moving from low-key to over-the-top at just the right moments.

6. **THE GAME** is barely genre, but it has a **TWILIGHT ZONE** kind of feel and takes a big leap into impossibility for the surprise ending. Many viewers refused to take leap of faith along with it (including me the first time around), but a second viewing proves how logical (in filmic terms) the twist is, even if it does violate reality. In any case, director David Fincher handles the noirish thriller with style to spare, and Michael Douglas holds center stage with an engaging performance.

7. **FACE/OFF** is a high-powered action film based on the premise of a cop and a criminal changing faces. The two leads, John Travolta and Nicholas Cage, seize the opportunity for all its worth, and director John Woo brings octane to burn in staging the shoot-outs. The script doesn't quite work the doppelganger theme to fullest advantage and occasionally asks us to suspend disbelief too far, but it is still more sophisticated than last year's other big action blockbuster, **AIR FORCE ONE**.

8. **ALIEN RESURRECTION** captured a sense of working-class squalor to rival the original, and the script by Joss Whedon managed to take the obligatory device of bringing back Ripley and actually turn it into something interesting: a meditation on the nature of



THE GAME, with Michael Douglas and Debra Kara Unger, barely qualifies as a genre film, but it nevertheless ranks among the best on view last year.

identity. There are some lapses (as in **ALIENS**, numerous beasties are offed, but their acid blood never breaches the ship's hull, and Winona Ryder's roll is under-acted), but Sigourney Weaver towers over the proceedings, giving a wonderfully ambiguous performance as the resurrected Ripley, part human and part alien. Plus, director Jean-Pierre Jeunet fills the frame with memorable images that give this entry in the series its own distinct personality.

9. Kevin Costner's **THE POSTMAN** takes a sophisticated approach to the post-apocalyptic genre. The film's action set-pieces are not up to the level of the no-brainer **WATERWORLD**, but the new film does achieve an epic sense of scale while never losing sight of the human story. Lasting nearly three hours, the film almost

sustains its length, and that's quite a lot of entertainment for your ticket-buying dollars.

10. With **CONTACT**, director Robert Zemeckis attempted, largely successfully, to make a serious science-fiction effort without the laser beams and space wars we've come to expect from the genre. The result is an admirable effort, slightly bogged down by its own refusal to resort to overhyped action, but the approach eventually pays dividends in the form of a spectacular final reel that takes viewers "beyond the infinite." Not that the film, based on Carl Sagan's novel, is **2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY**, yet it does capture an impressive sense of wonder, while only occasionally resorting to sci-fi clichés. All this, plus a great performance by Jodie Foster.

11. I'm cheating by adding an eleventh entry, but it seems only fair, because **KISSED** is a film that would have ranked in the Top Ten in most years. This impressive examination of necrophilia took us inside the head of a character many of us might not like to know so intimately in real life, and actually imbued her obsession with a with a surprisingly poignant spiritual component. Molly Parker is excellent in the lead, and first-time writer-director Lynne Stopkewich is someone to watch in the future.

HONORABLE MENTION

In a lesser year, many of the following films might have made the Top Ten list. Not to deny them their due, they get an Honorable Mention this year.

THE FIFTH ELEMENT was not only delightful eye candy; it was filled with action and amusing characters (particularly Gary Oldman's villain, he of the bizarre American accent). The story was a trifle, and the climax was anti-climactic, but that wasn't enough to spoil all the fun.

MEN IN BLACK was also a lot of great fun. Its deadpan tone, in the face of the outrageous events in the plot, was good for more than a few laughs, and many of the special effects were hilarious. The film's antagonist, however, was unimpressive, and the plot twists to set up the sequel (dumping Tommy Lee Jones' character so that Will Smith and Linda Fiorentino could team up for any future films) was a botch.

MIMIC brought Mexican auteur Guillermo Del Toro (**CRONOS**)'S stylish brand of horror to the States. The film captures a sense of realism missing from most contemporary horror, resulting in a film that actually frightens you—you're screaming in fear over the plight of the characters rather than laughing in detachment at the overdone achievements of the prosthetics team. Unfortunately, the ending is a bit of a letdown: the genetically-mutated insects are destroyed before they can escape the subways and wreck some real havoc on New York. With a better payoff, this film could have been a real blockbuster.

DECONSTRUCTING HARRY shows Woody Allen covering familiar territory, but with a difference: the blame for his character's neuroses, rather than being foisted off on the other characters, is laid at his own feet. The result is a stinging indictment of the typical Allen persona, one that breathes life into jokes that might have otherwise seemed old. As a writer and director, Allen uses many fantasy elements as comedic devices to undermine his character of Harry Block (such as having the author's fictional characters interact with him), making the film of interest not only to Allen fans but to genre fans as well.

While on the subject of Woody Allen, I would also like to offer a belated nod to **EVERYONE SAYS I LOVE YOU**. The film actually opened in an Oscar-qualifying run at the end of 1996 but did not go wide until 1997, which is when I finally got around to seeing it. Allen's attempt at a musical at first seems a gimmicky way of rehashing his familiar characters and techniques, with songs thrown in to

1997 was filled with reissues of beloved films, including the **STAR WARS** trilogy. However, by far the most welcome returnee was **THE LITTLE MERMAID**.



make the whole things seem different. Nevertheless, much of it is entertaining, and the fantasy sequences (including a song-and-dance number by ghosts at a mortuary) are amusing. Allen's handling of the musical elements may have had me repeatedly thinking, "Well, he's no Stanley Donen," but at the end, out of nowhere, comes a magnificent dance number between Allen and Goldie Hawn, on the banks of the Seine. Expert wire work allows Hawn to float gracefully in the air as part of the scenes excellent choreography. For Allen, whose strength is usually verbal comedy, this is one of his best visual sequences ever.

Speaking of rehashing familiar ideas, *ANASTASIA* was Don Bluth's best piece of feature animation in a long time, but it so obviously copied the Disney formula for success (strong-head heroine, big song-and-dance numbers, evil sorcerer with talking pet-sidekick) that once was left wishing for a little more daring and originality. Also, the film's grasp of history made *POCAHONTAS* seem like a model of textbook accuracy by comparison. Fortunately, all of this didn't stop the film from being much more entertaining than Disney's misguided effort to turn *HERCULES* into a cartoon comedy. Maybe Bluth has finally found his niche, as a studio director working on studio-developed projects.

TOMORROW NEVER DIES was far from being *GOLDFINGER*, but it did try hard to enliven the familiar formula, and it largely succeeded, in a superficial, big-budget action-flick kind of way. Meanwhile, *AUSTIN POWERS, INTERNATIONAL MAN OF MYSTERY* effectively played the spy genre for

VOLCANO refashioned the disaster genre's clichés into a fast-paced, action-packed satire which acknowledges viewers' desire to see L.A. trashed.



THE DEVIL'S ADVOCATE, with Al Pacino, was the year's best horror film—a funny and sophisticated tale of temptation.

laughs. I'm still only partially won over by Mike Myers' title character creation, but his embodiment of villainy, Dr. Evil (a transparent take off on Bond's Blofeld) was a real hoot—a screamingly accurate parody of the familiar supervillain character, so on-target that he could almost have fit into a real Bond movie.

REISSUES

The surprise success story of the year was the reissue of the *STAR WARS* trilogy (of course, everyone knew they would make money, but no one knew just how much money). Still, *RETURN OF THE JEDI* was just as bad as it ever was, and the modifications to *STAR WARS* were hardly improvements. Only *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*, always the best of the three, emerged relatively un-

scathed in its Special Edition version.

Also on view, if only briefly, was Roman Polanski's *REPULSION*, which holds up much better than I expected—an art house horror film based on the gradual psychological disintegration of its lead character (played with chilly psychosis by Catherine Deneuve). The film is not quite so perfect as its admirers would claim, but it does have a more than a few lessons to teach to today's genre practitioners.

Robert Aldrich's reworking of Micky Spillane's *KISS ME DEADLY* was restored to feature its complete ending (truncated in most prints previously available), but the restored version was available to most viewers only on videotape and laser disc. Still, a two-day engagement in Los Angeles is enough to qualify it for inclusion here (I'm always willing to stretch a point if it means acknowledging quality). This effective film noir starts out with a typical private eye plot, except its private eye is far from typical—practically a neanderthal beast whose crude ineffectiveness cannily undermines our expectations of noble heroism. Then, fascinatingly, it turns into an episode of *THE OUTER LIMITS* in its final reel—a daring transition that will leave you astounding and impressed.

The best of the reissues, however, was easily *THE LITTLE MERMAID*. Although Disney botched the release (opening it for only 17 days, before *ANASTASIA*, and then *reopening* it weeks after pulling it from theatres), the film it-

self was a triumph that manages to hold up, even when compared to the mega-successes that followed in its wake (*BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*, *ALLADIN*, *THE LION KING*). This was by far the best animated film on the big screen last year, far outdistancing both Fox's *ANASTASIA* and Disney's own *HERCULES*.

ACADEMY OF THE OVERRATED

There wasn't any obvious winner in this category. As usual, some films got an easier ride from critics than they deserved, and some marginal efforts were overpraised. Still, it takes some looking to find a really egregious example.

SCREAM 2 got a favorable reaction similar to that which greeted the overrated *SCREAM*. But the film is actually a little bit better than its predecessor, so the excess of praise was not quite so unwarranted this time.

I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER got mixed reviews, but that was still probably better than it deserved. The film trotted out the clichés of the stalk-and-slash genre with technical proficiency but little imagination, and the serial killer, when finally revealed, proved to be a colossal bore.

No, the winner this year has to be *THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE: THE NEXT GENERATION*. Sure, it was mostly (and rightfully) reviled, but it earned the distinction anyway, thanks to Joe Bob Briggs, who had the foolishness to call it the Best Horror Film of the '90s. □



SOUNDTRAX

by Randall Larson

ALIEN TONALITIES

Last year's best fantasy film music, both new and old.

Extraterrestrial contact was the topic of many science fiction films last year. First out of the gate was **MARS ATTACKS!** (Atlantic Classics 82992-2), released several months after the film's Christmas 1996 debut. Danny Elfman captured the film's nostalgic sense of '50s sci-fi through the omnipresent use of a theremin and a relentless, brassy main theme. The score is fun and exciting—it supported Burton's bizarre visions on screen and splashed like a crimson death ray across home speaker systems. Elfman scored again with **MEN IN BLACK** (Columbia CK 68859), providing evocative music in his best **BEETLEJUICE** style but with a splendid **PETER GUNN**-styled riff. The pop-jazz beat and use of electric bass and twangy electric guitar gives the score a tongue-in-cheek detective feel and is an adroit accompaniment to the film's satirical sensibility.

The year's most understated science fiction score was certainly Alan Silvestri's poignant **CONTACT** (Warner Bros 9 46811-2). Eschewing the bombast of **STAR WARS** or **STAR TREK**, Silvestri lent this thoughtful examination of science and faith a suitably introspective atmosphere. This intimacy reaches its peak in the scene on the beach where Jodie confronts the alien intelligence in the form of her father.

Basil Poledouris re-teamed with **ROBOCOP** director Paul Verhoeven to score **STARSHIP TROOPERS** (Varese Sarabande VSD-5877). Poledouris nailed the film from the start with the right amount of martial music, unified by a bold, heroic ascending theme. During quieter moments, the music becomes an intimate reflection of friendship and love. The bug attack cues are wildly frantic but kept under control; pulsating timpani, rolling snare drum and cymbals, chords of brass, flurries of violins and piping flutes are quite an adrenaline-pumping experience on CD.

John Debney and John Frizzel scored big with a pair of powerful horror scores. Debney's **THE RELIC** (released by the composer on a promotional CD, JDCD 006) is a ferocious mix of synths and symphs, one of the most incredibly dynamic and scary scores in years. Debney's music relates only to the savage biological predator roaming the museum catacombs. He has given voice to not so much the heart of the beast, but the visceral fury of its malignant monstrosity.

Likewise, Frizzel's **ALIEN RESURRECTION** (RCA 09026-68955-2) was a relentlessly potent musical onslaught. Inventive orchestration and an effective use of electronics created a notable underscore. Portions of the score are reminiscent in their melancholy ambiance of



John Frizzel's inventive score for **ALIEN RESURRECTION** (with Sigourney Weaver and Winona Ryder) was a relentlessly potent musical onslaught.

Goldsmith's original **ALIEN** theme. Frizzel's earlier score for the natural disaster terror film, **DANTE'S PEAK** (Varese Sarabande VSD-5793), overflows with hyper-dramatic action. Frizzel filled in for James Newton Howard, who wrote the theme and several cues but couldn't commit to doing the whole score. Frizzel built his score around Howard's bold orchestral motif for the explosive mountain. Frizzel creates plenty of sonic suspense, though the music is at its best when grounded solidly upon the Howard theme.

The return of James Bernard to film scoring after a hiatus of 25 years is cause for celebration. The fact that it's the 1922 German classic, **NOSFERATU** (Silva Screen FILMCD 192), rescored for live orchestral accompaniment—well, it's downright exhilarating. Bernard's music is rife with the kind of thrilling undulations and growing crescendos that he did so well in his Hammer **DRACULA** series. As with those scores—which took their melodic rhythm from the syllables **DRAC-u-la**—Bernard's primary theme here is a descending horn motif based on the rhythm of **Nos-fer-a-tu**. For the silent film, Bernard has written the necessary wall-to-wall music; more than an hour of the score's 90 minutes is preserved on this CD.

James Newton Howard provided a rich, darkly hued composition for **DEVIL'S ADVOCATE** (TVT 8140-2), combining a powerful orchestral and choir motif to represent the devil with a sad, melancholy tune for flute over reverbed harp. The score is somber and atmospheric—plenty of slowly-drifting chords accentuated by piano, harp, and electronics.

Honorable mention must go to a newcomer and then to one of film music's modern masters: Mario Beltrami, fresh off **SCREAM**, pro-

vided a nicely spooky score for **MIMIC** (Varese Sarabande VSD-5863), using orchestra, electronics, and a haunting female voice to create an alternately spooky and powerful musical sound design, while John Williams returned to Jurassic Park in **THE LOST WORLD** (MCA MCAD-11628). Williams handles the action sequences with precision, although the score really has no central theme other than occasional references to the **JURASSIC PARK** theme and a new, rhythmic motif Williams develops for the lost island of the film.

Howard Shore provided a highly modernistic, somewhat decadently erogenous score for the David Cronenberg's bizarre trip into auto-eroticism, **CRASH** (Milan 35774-2). There are no real melodies, but more an electric ambiance created by the guitars and harps, which tend to double one another to create a somewhat

claustrophobic sensitivity. Remixing, resynthesizing, and overlaying the tracks also added to the chaotic ambiance.

Varese Sarabande released a second volume of Joseph LoDuca's music from the syndicated TV series, **XENA WARRIOR PRINCESS** (VSD-5883). Emphasizing an eclectic mix of styles, samples, and voices, LoDuca has crafted a compelling sound design for the show, some of which is reminiscent of **Cirque de Soleil** (particularly "Quidam") in its varied ethnicity.

X-FILES composer Mark Snow turned in an exquisite score for the Michael Caine ABC miniseries, **20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA** (Prometheus PCD 143). Typically, Snow's music is more atmospheric than thematic, but his glorious main theme is a surging, wavelike ascension associated with the mysterious submarine, the **Nautilus**, and the megalomaniacal Captain Nemo. Veteran composer John Scott scored the other **20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA** (released on Scott's own promotional label, **JOS JSCD-122**). Scott's music for the Ben Cross version is nicely nautical, a surging, brass-driven main theme carried about by strings and winds. Despite the occasional orchestral surges, Scott's score remains fairly subdued, underlying the characters and their interplay more than the film's action.

Jay Gruska's music for **LOIS & CLARK: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN** (Sonic Images SI 8703-2) is a pleasing CD with plenty of variety and a good, solid main theme—suitably stalwart, uplifting, and sturdy enough to sustain several variations. With nearly an hour of music, the CD is refreshingly varied and very enjoyable.

But the best TV score album of the year had to be Alf Clausen's deliriously inventive compila-

tion of music from *THE SIMPSONS: Music In The Key Of Springfield* (Rhino R2 72723). The CD features an assortment of cues, songs, dialog extracts, and musical satires such as the riotous musical rendition of *PLANET OF THE APES*. Clausen's musical work on this fast-paced farcical series is constantly inventive and varied.

Unearthed and Resurrected Scores

Out of the 20th Century-Fox vaults came the "Fox Classics" series, produced by Nick Redman and released by Varese Sarabande after 20th Century-Fox Records ceased to function. *PLANET OF THE APES* (Varese Sarabande VSD-5848) was coupled with the hitherto unreleased score for *ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE APES*. *PLANET* is one of Jerry Goldsmith's most innovative scores, utilizing a variety of acoustic instruments to create a peculiar musical pallet. Whereas *PLANET* was completely acoustic, Goldsmith enhanced *ESCAPE* with some modern electric guitar and brass to match the film's contemporary domain.

Also given first CD release from were two Goldsmith thrillers from the '70s, *THE MEPHISTO WALTZ* and *THE OTHER* (Varese Sarabande VSD-5851). Both demonstrate alternate methods of scoring thrillers: one supernatural and highly atonal, suitable for a tale of demonic possession; the other psychological and highly melodic, suitable for a story of a disturbed boy in rural Connecticut.

The atmospheric ambiance of Howard Shore's music enhanced David Cronenberg's controversial *CRASH*, with James Spader and Elias Koteas.



Danny Elfman's thermin-enhanced score for *MARS ATTACKS!* captured a manic sense of '50s sci-fi nostalgia.

Rhino also restored one of Goldsmith's best horror scores with their lavish 68-minute rerelease of *POLTERGEIST* (Rhino R2 72725). With nine unreleased cues, and most of the other cues containing previously unreleased portions, the CD contains all the music Goldsmith recorded for the film.

Bernard Herrmann also benefitted from Nick Redmond's "Fox Classics" series. The lavishly orchestrated *JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH* (Varese VSD-5849) was released, as was his romantic score for *THE GHOST AND MRS. MUIR* (Varese VSD-5850). Re-recordings of both have been available (Elmer Bernstein conducting *GHOST*; Herrmann himself conducting *JOURNEY*); the original versions contain more music although with less dynamics than the more technologically up-to-date re-recordings. Also from Varese was a new recording of Herrmann's brilliant strings-only music for Hitchcock's *PSYCHO* (Varese VSD-7565), vibrantly recorded by Joel McNeely, conducting the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in an extended performance of the full score.

Les Baxter's inventive AIP re-scoring for Mario Bava's *BLACK SUNDAY* and *BARON BLOOD* was reissued in nice form by Citadel (STC 77110). Baxter frequently rescored Italian films such as these when released stateside. These scores featured marvelously inventive orchestral nuance, spooky aural ambiances, and bubbling bombastic surges. Citadel has done us a service by reissuing this important recording.

Frank LaLoggia's lyrical music for *LADY IN WHITE*, the spellbinding ghost film he directed in 1988, was reissued for the first time on CD in a splendid package from Holland (South-East SER 289B03). Assisted by music supervisor John Massari, LaLoggia produced a finely crafted symphonic score—spirited, breezy, and spooky. The CD includes two of the composer's original electronic versions of cues later fleshed

into orchestral renditions for the film, and also includes an interactive CD-ROM supplement containing movie production info, movie stills, and an interview with LaLoggia.

The complete score for *DUNE*, by the pop group Toto was reissued (PEG Recordings, PEG 015) in an extended CD. Missing is Brian Eno's "Prophecy Theme," but added are 15 unreleased cues, including a demo version of the main theme. The music, performed by the Vienna Symphony Orchestra, is a first-rate effort.

Pino Donaggio's beautiful score for Brian DePalma's *CARRIE* saw its first CD release on Ryko (10701). The music is lyrical and richly melodic; unfortunately, Ryko's "deluxe" edition had seen fit to intrude on the music with excerpts of the film's dialog.

Arthur B. Rubinstein's music for John Badham's *BLUE THUNDER* (1983) saw its first CD release in a promotional recording from SuperTracks (ARCD-01). Using an early mix of orchestra and electronics, Rubinstein underlined the story's futuristic power and technology. The CD is a straight rerelease of the 1983 soundtrack LP.

Finally, Max Steiner's atmospheric score for the 1946 Peter Lorre thriller, *THE BEAST WITH FIVE FINGERS*, has been lovingly restored by John Morgan and performed by the Moscow Symphony Orchestra, helmed by William Stromberg, on *THE LOST PATROL/VIRGINIA CITY* (Marco Polo 8.223870). One of the few horror films Steiner ever scored, the music is based on Bach's piano composition, *D minor Chaconne*, which Steiner adapts into a harsh, descending orchestral motif with a dirge-like rhythm. Other cues show Steiner at his mysterious best—chilling string spirals, swirling percussion rolls, and strident brass descents, linked by the omnipresent piano motif representing the wandering appendage. One of Steiner's most neglected yet interesting scores is nicely preserved in this new recording. □



LASERBLAST by Dennis Fischer

FLIPPING THROUGH 1997 *Looking for the overlooked gems preserved on disc.*

1997 was an interesting year in the field of visual digital technology, thanks to the dawn of the Digital Video Disc, which offers a less expensive way to enjoy the features and quality of a laser disc presentation. Still, laser discs offer more than 15,000 titles; the format has offered some fascinating special editions unavailable anywhere else; and both Pioneer and Image have lowered prices on selected features to be more competitive with DVDs. This year, two summer blockbusters, *THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK* (MCA Home Video) and *MEN IN BLACK* (Columbia/TriStar) were offered on disc in time for the Christmas buying season. The *MEN IN BLACK* package is particularly nice—as well as being by far the more entertaining movie—offering the film's climax on a separate disc in CAV, adding a music video of Will Smith's end title song, and featuring an enjoyable running commentary by director Barry Sonnenfeld.

Major Hollywood features such as these and *INDEPENDENCE DAY* (FoxVideo) were given superb transfers with outstanding multichannel sound. My favorite package this year was Universal's special edition of Terry Gilliam's *12 MONKEYS*, as one's appreciation of the film increases with each viewing, and the bonus material is intelligently put together. Universal also deserves kudos for their special handling of the fantasy-oriented *LIAR, LIAR* (a low-priced special edition, featuring commentary and outtakes) and their wonderful double feature release of *COLOSSUS: THE FORBIN PROJECT* and *SILENT RUNNING*.

However, for this round-up of '97, I want to draw your attention to a few excellent discs you might have missed. Paramount's release of John Frankenheimer's *SECONDS* (1966) is offered on disc in a special widescreen edition. Frankenheimer restored a few crucial minutes of footage censored back in the '60s and offers an interesting commentary track as well. *SECONDS* plays with the idea of a bored, middle-aged businessman (expertly played by John Randolph) being recruited by an underground group to get a second chance at life. He undergoes exten-



Although overshadowed by the live-action theatrical version, HBO's animated *SPAWN* is the superior piece of story-telling, now available on laser disc.

sive plastic surgery, is able to assume the career of a somewhat successful painter, and emerges being played by Rock Hudson. While the character takes a stab at living the bohemian life, he remains unfulfilled, not realizing what it was that had made him unhappy in the first place. Frankenheimer wanted to underscore this point with a scene that had been trimmed from the film depicting the character's attempt to meet his daughter, but he was unable to locate the footage. All that survives is the mysterious end shot of a man and small girl walking on the beach that comes to represent the character's longing.

This is truly character-driven science fiction, smartly scripted by Lewis John Carlino from David Ely's erratic novel, with an excellent cast of supporting players (many of whom were survivors of

the blacklist). Will Geer is particularly chilling as the old man who set up the organization and is obsessive about recruiting more people, while never feeling the need to undergo the process himself. Frankenheimer and cinematographer James Wong Howe create some simple but brilliant images along the way that lend a stark, striking atmosphere. The film deserves the status of a science fiction classic.

Another classic is Disney's *SLEEPING BEAUTY*, available in its full 2.35 aspect ratio glory only on laser disc. (The film was shot in Technirama 70, making it the first widescreen cartoon.) Its images look like medieval tapestries come to life, based on designs by artist Eyvind Earle, and utilizing music from Tchaikovsky's *Sleeping Beauty* Ballet. The story, based on the famous Charles Perrault ver-

sion of the fairy tale, is quite charming, and in *Maleficent* (voiced by Eleanor Audley), the Disney team created one of their best villains, a truly imposing figure who transforms into a fearsome dragon at the end. Like the cassette version, the CLV version is followed by a brief but informative "Making of" short, and the CAV deluxe edition also offers the Academy Award-winning accompanying short cartoon, "Grand Canyon," as well as a featurette on Tchaikovsky that accompanied the film on many of its initial playdates. After the deluxe *HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME* set, Disney has announced that it will no longer be making deluxe edition boxed sets as they have not been selling particularly well.

Every once in a while a film comes along that sparks a revolution in film-making. One such film was Tsui Hark's *ZU: WARRIORS FROM THE MAGIC MOUNTAIN* (Tai-Seng), which has been released domestically on disc. This first Hong Kong special effects extravaganza paved the way for a raft of similarly colorful fantasy-action films. Made for \$30 million HK dollars by producer Tsui Hark, *ZU* is based on a 50 volume epic, Lee Sau-Man's *The Legend of the Zu Mountain Warriors*, only a small portion of which was adapted here. The story itself follows Ti, a young soldier (Yuen Biao), who escapes from battle to be attacked by creatures with glowing eyes, then saved by *sifu* Ting Yen (Adam Cheng). Ti volunteers to become Ting Yen's disciple, but the *sifu* is not interested, instead joining rival Hsiao and his student I-Chen in battling evil. The primary evil is a Blood Demon, kept in check by the wizard Long Brows (Sammo Hung), who needs the group to find the magical Twin Swords before the Blood Demon can escape to wreak havoc on the world.

Tai Seng presents the original Hong Kong version of *ZU* in letterbox, along with additional scenes filmed for the expanded English language version known as *ZU: TIME WARRIORS*. Tsui had wanted to present the film as a time travel story framed by a modern-day setting in which Yuen Biao is a college student who travels back in time to find his girlfriend Morning



John Frankenheimer's science-fiction classic *SECONDS* (with Rock Hudson) was restored for laser disc by Paramount.

Flower (Moon Lee), so when it came time to create an export version, he filmed a 28-minute prologue to explain more of the plot to Western audiences.

ZU's lacks the heart and poetry of the best Hong Kong fantasy films, but it is truly a visual feast with almost non-stop surrealistic effects and action. Tai Seng transferred the film in its original Cantonese with clear English subtitles placed before the letterboxed image. The saturated color scheme can create some color noise, but this is as good a print of the original as you are likely see.

Back in 1980, Roger Corman and Robert Houston recut, rescored, redubbed, and retitled a stylized Japanese Samurai film; emphasizing action over plot, trimming away motivation, and adding a voice-over narration, they thus created *SHOGAN ASSASSIN*, about a mystically gifted ronin who faced female ninja with magical powers. At last, AnimEigo presents the original Japanese classic *LONE WOLF AND CUB: BABY CART AT THE RIVER STYX* in a slightly cropped letterboxed edition. Wakayama Tomisaburo stars as Ogami Itto, the former Shogunate executioner who lost his position because of a conspiracy by the Yagyu clan and now wanders the roads with his son Daigoro in a baby cart, working as an assassin for hire. The characters appeared in a series of stylized action films directed by Misumi Kenji, of which this is the second. In this chapter, Ogami is hired by the secret of Awa's clan to kill a defector who is protected by a fearsome trio

known as the "Gods of Death," while the Yagyu have hired the female Akashi-Yagyu Ninja to dispose of their troublesome foe.

AnimEigo has done a superb job in translating the film, using different colored subtitles to differentiate speakers and providing copious background notes to help Western viewers understand any subtleties. The sound is monoaural; the colors are clear and crisp; and the action-packed climax is offered in CAV. The footage that introduced the character in *SHOGUN ASSASSIN* was taken from *LONE WOLF AND CUB: SWORD OF VENGEANCE*, which AnimEigo also offers.

While a lot of attention was given to the theatrical version of Todd McFarlane's black superhero *SPAWN*, HBO's animated adaptation outshines its competitor as a piece of storytelling. Available on a special edition laser disc, the 140 minute uncut compilation lets viewers know from the very start, *SPAWN* that this is no children's cartoon, with foul language, gruesome action, and gritty visuals. The disc also features running commentary by McFarlane, who seems clueless as to why some people might find a hell-powered superhero satanic or offensive, but he gleefully extols the character's status as the best-selling comic book of the '90s. While *Spawn* plays with the dark side of human nature, it is really about what teenaged boys think is cool (mass destruction, foul language, extreme violence, nifty supernatural powers), and on that level, it plays like a twisted nightmare.

while preventing the situation from disrupting the broadcast of *ALL MY CHILDREN*—which might alienate female voters! A second civil war starts brewing as political opportunists take sides in the debate, leading to the destruction of the Alamo and the blowing up of the statue of liberty.

While not especially humorous, Martyn Burke's story is smart and filled with satirical barbs when not relying on stereotypes. The cast features Dante regulars Dick Miller, Kevin McCarthy, William Schallert, Robert Picardo, Belinda Balaski, as well as such formidable talents as James Earl Jones, Kevin Dunn, Joanna Cassidy, and Brian Keith, with an effective cameo from Roger Corman as a television executive, and Ron Perlman playing a normal human being for a change. The film is designed to raise issues concerning this country, rather than manipulating audiences to stand up and cheer, and HBO deserves kudos for preserving it on disc.

Finally, the cold, antiseptic prose of J.G. Ballard's novel is matched by director David Cronenberg's cool visuals in *CRASH* (Criterion), his surprisingly faithful adaptation of Ballard's cult classic. The laser disc has a sharp transfer that preserves some of the flaws of the film itself. It features running commentary by Cronenberg that centers mostly on technical background information about the making of the film, rather than explaining why Cronenberg made the choices he did and what he intended the film to mean. The disc also includes an international trailer, a U.S. trailer, and some videotaped behind-the-scenes interviews. □

From HBO comes the overlooked science fiction satire *THE SECOND CIVIL WAR*, ably directed by Joe Dante. This serious and interesting film explores America a few years in the future after a nuclear attack on Pakistan by India creates a passel of orphans who inadvertently become a political football. The main setting is News Net, a CNN-style network, run by Mel Burgess (Dan Hedaya) who insists on keeping the orphans on the air to attract better ratings. Meanwhile, Jim Farley (Beau Bridges), governor of Idaho, refuses the orphans entry into his state, causing presidential publicity adviser Jack Buchan (James Coburn) to advise a spineless President (Phil Hartman) to act like Eisenhower and demand that the Pakistani children become integrated into the community,

Last summer's biggest blockbuster, *MEN IN BLACK* (starring Will Smith and Tommy Lee Jones) was out on laser disc in time for Christmas shopping.



VIDEOFILE

by John Thonen

THE YEAR'S BEST & WORST DTV EFFORTS

A jet-propelled turtle flies to the top of the heap.

BEST SCIENCE FICTION

There was some decent competition here, but the hands-down winner is A.D. Vision's *GAMERA: GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE*. Director Shusuke Kaneko has reinvented Daiei Studio's less-than-classic entry into Kaiju Eiga lore. While some humor has to creep into a concept about a 200-foot, jet-propelled turtle, Kaneko plays the film straight. This is a dark tale, offering a new mythology for the battling behemoths, as genetically engineered war machines of a lost civilization. The special effects are largely of the man-in-a-suit variety, but very well executed. The film also utilizes brief but dazzling moments of CGI to make the proceedings palatable to '90s viewers. If you've ever enjoyed a giant monster movie, this is the film for you.

GAMERA, GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE tops the sci-fi efforts of 1997. The film received limited theatrical bookings in 1996 but was essentially direct-to-video.



WORST SCIENCE FICTION

THE P.A.C.K. (Spectrum Films)—Prefabricated Animalistic Cybernetic Killer, for anyone who cares—is an alien warrior from the Planet of the Halloween Masks, who falls to Earth and slaughters some backwoods idiots (possibly the producers family). The lone survivor of a government team must stop the boredom—sorry, terror. It's hard to imagine that inane drivel like this is still made, and how sad it is that a talent like Sandahl Bergman is trapped in it.

BEST OUTLAW

The trick in this category used to lie in finding even one movie worth recommending. This year there are several; however, it's Joseph Parda's *5 DEAD ON A CRIMSON CANVAS* (El Video) which I found irresistible. Parda's super-8 offering is a near-perfect recreation of the Italian giallo thrillers of the '60s and '70s. This sub-genre harbors a few classics (*DEEP RED*, *BLOOD AND BLACK LACE*), but most were mediocre. It's this third-feature-at-a-drive-in quality that Parda has duplicated. This film is recommended to those who love the cheap giallo; others may want to check out Ronnie Soritor's Raimi-esque *RAVAGE* or Matthew Jason Walsh's well-acted *BLOODLETTING*.

WORST OUTLAW

If the Outlaw movement is ever to gain mainstream respectability, someone will have to filter out amateur dreck like Swiss Home Video's *SACRIFICE OF THE WHITE GODDESS*. Lacking in almost all technical areas and looking like a fourth generation dupe, the film's only points of interest are some bare breasts and an okay pagan altar. I'm sure the folks that made this had a good time and enjoy watching it while sharing a keg of beer. All others beware.

BEST HORROR

The few DTV horrors of 1997 were forgettable at best or unforgettably bad at worst. It's tempting to place Trimark's *THE DENTIST* in the latter category. Brian Yuzna's film, from a Stuart Gordon-Dennis Paoli script, is frequently offensive, surprisingly misogynistic, and utterly lacking a conventional protagonist for the viewer to identify with. I honestly cannot say I enjoyed viewing it; however, nearly a year later, much of the film is still fresh in my mind. Corbin Bernsen charts his character's descent into madness with a wonderful, over-the-top performance, and the film is easily Yuzna's most effective directorial job to date—unpleasant, unnerving, and deliriously unswerving in its goal to horrify. As much as I might personally like to reject *THE DENTIST*, it achieves its goal. What more can you ask of a horror film?

WORST HORROR

There may be enough bad acting and unintentional hilarity in *WEREWOLF* (A-Pix) to offer some slight entertainment value. Totally unacceptable, however, is that two decades after *AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON*, this film resorts to cutaway cheats that were passe in the 40s. It does boast a great video box. When you move it, the guy on the front turns into a wolf. Unfortunately, this is easily the best special effect you'll see if you rent this howler.

BEST BAND/CORMAN

Charlie Band's video output has slowed to a trickle during '97. Amazingly, one of his handful of releases is among the better films to emerge from his Full Moon video label. *VAMPIRE JOURNALS* finds director Ted Nicolaou once more on the gloomy streets of Romania. Unlike his gory *SUBSPECIES* films, Nicolaou's latest vampiric chronicle is rather low

key; a miniscule budget forces the director to rely on atmospheric visuals, and he proves more than adequate to the demand. The cast is small but unusually strong for a Band production, and the mood is an all pervasive one of doom and despair. Nicolaou remains the best kept secret in genre filmmaking.

WORST BAND/CORMAN

A couple's distant travels are interrupted when they stumble on the sold survivor of a derelict vessel. The handsome but demented castaway quickly obsesses on the wife, strands the husband, and from then on it's the wife against the crazy as hubby tries to survive long enough to save her. If this sounds familiar, it's because *CIRCUIT BREAKER* (New Horizons) is a *DEAD CALM* rip-off, transplanted to outer space. Cursed with special effects beneath the average Saturday morning kiddie series, this debuted in '96 on Corman's Showtime movie series as *INHUMANOID*. Richard Grieco and Corbin Bernsen do supply a certain level of professionalism to the proceedings, but lead actress Lara Harris, conveys only total disinterest. Same as the audience.

BEST SEQUEL

The best of a meager lot was A-Pix's *ALIEN CHASER* (aka *ORION'S KEY*) which was produced as the fourth entry in the *SHADOWCHASER* series. The film is basically an extended chase, given some novelty by its South African setting. Director Mark Roper shows some flair in several non-dialogue sequences, particularly the impressive opening. The cast is better than average, and the film even manages a little bit of honest emotion. It's far from a classic, but *ALIEN CHASER* is distinguished from the rest of '97's DTV sequels by at least being worth the price of a rental.

WORST SEQUEL

HELL COMES TO FROGTOWN ('87) was one of the goofiest films in recent memory, but it was kind of fun. Semi-sequel *TOAD WARRIOR* is so bad as to negate any pleasures the first might have provided. Shot on video, heavily padded, suffering from a number of continuity problems, and cast with (admittedly attractive) high school drama rejects, this is so bad it could qualify in the Worst Outlaw category. However, director Maximo T. Bird is actually series creator Donald G. Jackson, and he has been kicking around the lower levels of the film industry too long to be cut any slack. Maybe next time, he should make something he's willing to put his real name on. □

REVIEWS

FILM RATINGS

- Must see
- Excellent
- Good
- Mediocre
- Fodder for MST-3K

MR MAGOO

Director: Stanley Tong. Writers: Pat Proft, Tom Sherohman, Walt Disney, 12/97. 87 mins. PG. With: Leslie Nielsen, Kelly Lynch, Ernie Hudson, Malcolm McDowell, Miguel Ferrer.

Helmed by Hong Kong's Stanley Tong (*RUMBLE IN THE BRONX*), MR. MAGOO was naturally publicized as a Hong Kong-style action-comedy, wherein Leslie Nielsen would become the Jackie Chan of Magoos. Although doused in hilarity and creative action, Tong's concern with pleasing Disney's non-violent mandate has sadly flattened his stylized action vision, thereby shortchanging his abilities. The opera sequence breathes pure comedic genius, but just as it gets going, the fat lady sings.

However, Nielsen's performance as the nearsighted, grumbling canned-vegetable magnate Quincy Magoo—who myopically foils jewel thieves and swindles malicious mobsters—is a slapstick scream. Tong also intelligently handles Angus the bulldog's role as Magoo's fail-safe—a comedic canine sidekick who cutely prevents Magoo from tripping over misplaced objects in his path. Traditionally, we laughed at his visual *faux pas*, something the film initially captures only to downplay it later, when Magoo turns Maxwell Smart-ish. The end credits' disclaimer stating that “the blind and visually impaired can lead productive lives too,” explains why Disney pulled the plugs on focusing too much attention on Magoo's “non-sight” gags.

Although the physical comedy is loaded with authentic “ouch-induced” stunts and (applaudingly) minimal CGI, Tong's patented fisticuff routines lacked his usual punch, pace, and pizzazz. Ultimately, it's perhaps a bad time for this film because today's kids probably haven't heard of Mr. Magoo and therefore just won't get it.

●● Craig D. Reid

MOUSE HUNT

Director: Gore Verbinski. Writer: Adam Rifkin. DreamWorks, 12/97. 97 mins. PG. With: Nathan Lane, Lee Evans, Christopher Walken, William Hickey.

MOUSE HUNT is like a patchwork quilt of many popular films and Hollywood trends. A little HOME ALONE slapstick is stitched together with some of the cute animal tricks from BABE; it's woven with hyperactive camera work reminiscent of the Coen Brothers, and if you look closely at the knitting, you'll see a touch of Tim Burton and Terry Gilliam. Nothing is wrong with this, of course; after all, if you're going to borrow, borrow from the best. But MOUSE HUNT is a patchwork that unravels quickly, until there's nothing left except the one-joke that seems to have inspired the film.

The story, of two brothers (Lane and Evans) who battle a rodent over domain of an inherited house, does provide some of the intended laughter



In the trailer for *MOUSE HUNT*, the mouse uses olives to create a silhouette of Micky Mouse on the wall. The antics of the film itself are not always so clever.

(a scene in which the mouse weaves its way through a room full of mouse traps is beautifully choreographed). For the most part, however, the audience seems to be guessing the next fall, bump, or bonk long before the characters in the film. The film also wastes its cast. If you have Nathan Lane and Christopher Walken, you should think of something better for them to do than scream and fall down stairs.

Commercial director Gore Verbinski (the Budweiser Frogs) shows that he is proficient at the minutia of visual effects, as many of the sequences featuring the titular mouse are indeed fun to watch (he snuggles into a sardine can-cum-bed with surprising believability). Such scenes could have made for great family entertainment, but the director and production designer Linda DeScena don't seem happy enough with this, as they've given the film a bleak look, coupled with a viscous, black-comedy edge that weighs everything down in a strange, depressing tone. Overall, the film is a mixed bag: it wants us to laugh at characters vomiting up half-eaten cockroaches and being covering in human excrement, and then expects us to care about them when the film ends. Sorry, but *MOUSE HUNT* is too thin a patchwork to warm the heart.

● Mike Lyons

ANIME

USHIO AND TORA

Director: Kunihiko Yuyama. Screenplay: Kenji Tera-da, from the Manga by Kazuhiro Fujita. ADV Films, 11/97. 60 mins. Dubbed.

A nimble blending of comedy and horror highlights this anime series. Ushio, a teenager with little use for the adults around him (“senile” is his favorite adjective), inadvertently releases Tora, a bloodthirsty demon, from his centuries-old imprisonment. With only the “Beast Spear,” a magical, nearly sentient weapon, to hold the monster in check, the boy finds his life overturned as matters supernatural take precedent over cramming for exams. It's THE

ODD COUPLE with life-or-death stakes: in Ushio's eyes, Tora (with his confusion over modern technology and his complaints that the heavily perfumed inhabitants of Tokyo make it hard to find a decent meal) is just another senile elder (albeit a hungrily vicious one) come to wreck the boy's fun; for the beast, Ushio is little more than a snot-nosed kid who, mortification upon mortification, has stumbled upon an unbounded and unwarranted power. Not surprisingly, as they join forces to battle myriad demons, monsters, and malevolent spirits, they also begin to form a grudging admiration for each other. At once genuinely frightening and surprisingly sweet-natured, *USHIO & TORA* proves that the sublime conjunction of laughter and chills didn't end with *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN*.

●● Dan Persons

MADE-FOR-TELEVISION

DEAD BY MIDNIGHT

Director: Jim McBride. Writer: Michael Vickerman. ABC-TV, 11/97. 2 hrs. w/ commercials. With: Timothy Hutton, Suzy Amis, John Glover, Max Wright.

Same old, same old: a seemingly happy businessman (Hutton) starts having bizarre visions of a pleading woman—the only thing (except for a vague feeling of emptiness) that mars his blissful life and marriage. Suddenly, the memories come in a flood, and this man, Larkin, discovers that he is actually a secret government experiment, bionically enhanced and mentally reprogrammed so that he can be used as a killing machine when his government needs him. His wife (Amis) is actually a biologist on the project, and the woman in his visions is his dead wife, killed by Armand Drake (Glover). No one expected his memories to return, and once Larkin (actually named Sam Ellis) discovers that his daughter was hidden by the project's lead scientist (Wright), nothing will stop him from getting her back, except maybe the electronic tether in his brain, set to kill

him by midnight the next day.

It all sounds infinitely more interesting than it really is. The resulting movie is somewhat silly, certainly derivative, and never makes the most of its subject matter, which would involve having an actual budget to shoot with. The only real fun in the film comes from watching old pros Hutton and Glover act, react and over-act to an entertaining extent. The only dramatically effective moments are in the beginning, when Larkin's real and unreal memories collide, creating an almost surreal moment when he runs from what he thinks is his house into the vacant lot outside of the lab where he has been living since dying and being brought back to life three years earlier.

Had the film kept up with this approach—watching Larkin/Ellis fight with perceived reality while trying to find out who he is and why he can work wonders with a computer or run for miles without getting winded—this might have been more fun. But only the male leads are worth watching; as with Vincent Price before them, Hutton and Glover act up a storm, giving the material more than it really is worth.

●● Frederick C. Szebin

THE DEVIL'S CHILD

Director: Bobby Roth. Writer: Pablo F. Feajves; story Feajves and Laurence Minkoff. ABC, 10/97. 2 hrs. w/commercials. With: Kim Delany, Colleen Flynn, Matthew Lillard, Thomas Gibson.

Delany plays photographer Nikki DeMarco, whose mother made a deal with the devil when Nikki was a child and about to die from a fall. Grown up, Nikki finds herself in a supernatural predicament after her mom dies: her friends talk her into moving into a creepy apartment building with creepy gargoyles out front; the best work begins coming her way after her rival is killed by a driverless car; and mysterious and creepy Alex (Gibson) comes into her life, makes her preppers despite the fact that the fall caused the destruction of her reproductive system, and a dog that bit Alex dies when it leaps from a three story window.

This stuff was tired by 1976 when *THE OMEN* offered its variation on

Mr. Magoo (Leslie Nielsen) mistakes a vicious baboon for an ugly child in the feature film *MR. MAGOO*.



the theme of the devil's upcoming heir. The dull script is by the book: candles blow out when Alex enters a room and after he makes love to Nikki; lovelorn Tim warns Nikki about her new beau, only to turn up dead; her own apartment contained a woman who was buried in the wall; her priest spends the picture trying to save her soul when he suddenly flies through the stained glass; her friends have been involved the whole time, yada, yada, yada. No surprises, no suspense, and Ira Levin should sue. ● Frederick C. Szebin

MEDUSA'S CHILD

Director: Larry Shaw. Teleplay: Ellen Weston, from the novel by John Nance. ABC-TV, 11/97. TV-PG. 4 hrs, w/commercials. With: Vincent Spano, Lori Loughlin, Gail O'Grady, Chris Noth, Kevin Dillon, John Glover, Martin Sheen.

File under: Better-than-it-sounds TV movie. Spano is the former military pilot starting his own civilian air freight service. On his first flight he accidentally loads O'Grady's supposedly harmless mock-up of a prototype bomb build by nut-bar and former husband Glover. This device, code-named Medusa, is designed to give the electromagnetic pulse to end all electromagnetic pulses when powered by a thermonuclear explosion, it will wipe out anything remotely electronic. In our increasingly technological society, that could be a problem, particularly on the world power front. While in flight, the dastardly deed is revealed; to get even to his ex, Glover has created an actual Medusa devise, primed to track O'Grady through her pacemaker. Set for 13 hours, it will go off anyway, destroying the nation's capitol and several million people in the bargain.

Mini series of late have not used their format properly, fleshing out in four hours what could have been handled in two or three. But MEDUSA'S CHILD uses all of its time wisely, adapting Nance's novel in a taut script, filling the cast with able and likable actors, and choosing a director who knows how to build nuclear threat and terrorist drama like it used to be in films like BLACK SUNDAY, TWILIGHT'S LAST GLEAMING and RED ALERT—suspenseful, exciting, with no unnecessary subplots to fill the time. There is more than enough going on to handle the four-hour schedule; three couples' lives are in the balance; political shenanigans almost destroy us all; and the lives of the five innocent people on the plane are never intruding in that horrendous "moment" when each character gets to open a piece of themselves through unnecessary and usually maudlin dialogue. There's too little time for that as the suspense builds, marvelous visuals heighten the drama and we discover that, damn it, Vincent Spano can act! Excellent work also from Sheen as the President of the U.S., a dream commander who isn't afraid to kick butt when butt needs to be kicked.

Despite a slow, sloppy start, the film doesn't stop once it's airborne, showing that whether in four hours or 20, a proper story, well presented, will fill the time on its own with nary a glance at the clock from an involved viewer.

●●● Frederick C. Szebin



Tabloid reporter Richard Dees (Miguel Ferrer) investigates a bloody murder at an airport in Stephen King's story THE NIGHT FLIER. The tele-film, which debuted on HBO in November, received a minimal theatrical run in February.

THE NIGHT FLIER

Director: Mark Pavia. Teleplay: Pavia & Jack O'Donnell, from the story by Stephen King. HBO, 11/97. 2 hrs, w/commercials. With: Miguel Ferrer, Julie Entwisle, Dan Monahan, Michael B. Moss.

Based on a King story first published in the 1988 anthology *Prime Evil*, this tale follows the exploits of tabloid journalist Richard Dees as the ultra-jaded reporter walks the bloody trail of a vampire calling himself Dwight Renfield (Moss) a cue horror buffs are sure to get. This blood drinker doesn't bother with bat wings, but chooses to fly the friendly skies in a black Cessna, followed closely by Dees in his own plane. Dees quickly finds out that the story of what he thought was just another blood-drinking wacko is, in fact, the real deal who knows that he's being followed.

THE NIGHT FLIER isn't one of King's best stories, most effective at the end when Dees is confronted from behind by the vampire in an airport bathroom with the reporter facing the mirror, seeing only himself. As far as the adaptation goes, it's quite faithful to the source. The film story is so faithful that, like the short story, the film's most effective moments are at the end, expanded to an even more creepy and satisfying conclusion as Dees is faced with the walking dead of Renfield's handiwork, each forcing the reporter to see parts of himself in their undead eyes.

Until the final ten minutes, though, the picture is pretty routine. It might have been an error to choose totally unsympathetic tabloid journalists as main characters, particularly in this Post-Diana climate, or even in a Pre-Diana climate. Watching them practice their unsavory art doesn't make for very engrossing drama, at least not here. We're forced to feel sorry for cub reporter Katherine (Entwisle) when Dees is given her story, but it doesn't work. "God, I hope he kills more people!" gushes editor Morrison (Monahan) after hearing of more of the Nightflier's antics is the type of satire this film con-

siders viable sarcastic commentary for the age. It's a bat in the face, instead of a tickle of the ribs, and none of the film's such views on the tabloid press come across as either darkly amusing or particularly satiric. Just miscued. The always creepy effects of KNB add to the eeriness of the ending rather nicely, and nobody can play an interesting unsympathetic character like Ferrer, but THE NIGHT FLIER simply doesn't have the wings to sustain its feature length.

●● Frederick C. Szebin

THE THIRD TWIN

Director: Tom McLoughlin. Teleplay: Cindy Myers, from the novel by Ken Follett. CBS, 11/97. 4 hrs, w/commercials. TV-14. With: Kelly McGillis, Jason Gedrick, Larry Hagman, Ralph Waite, Hal Holbrook, Marion Ross.

In this latest clone-conspiracy thriller, a psychobiologist (McGillis) searching for a criminal gene through twins raised apart stumbles onto a 25-year cloning experiment set up by the very man who heads her genetic studies funding (Hagman). Apparently her theory about a specific gene for criminal behavior is right, because every Jason Gedricky-looking guy in the movie shows some sign of psychotic behavior. A good Gedrick helps McGillis meander through other versions of himself—a couple murderers, a sadist, etc.—to get enough evidence to hang Hagman out to dry.

Clone thrillers seem to follow certain rules, and this one has them all; mistaken identity, mistrust in the wrong Gedrick, and the traditional unveiling of the conspiracy at a press-thronged meeting with various Gedricks crowding along the sidelines. This two-parter is certainly better than the lame CLONING from NBC a month before, and has more depth thanks to better source material, more time for dramatic build-up and a cast of solid performers. But THE THIRD TWIN is still used goods. THE CLONES and PARTS: THE CLONUS HORROR also went over similar material, which is cutely ironic considering

its subject matter. It's nice to see McGillis back to work, Larry Hagman is always a hoot to watch, and Gedrick seems to be having a good old time with all his evil leering juggling with good-boy humility.

But, aside from effective final close ups of Gedrick and McGillis wondering if Gedrick's good boy really won't exhibit the genetic criminal traits of all his other selves, there really isn't anything new here. Only once does the film make the most out of its material of look-alikes trading places: when McGillis is in a moving car with an evil Gedrick, thinking he's actually a good Gedrick. Otherwise, it's the same the same the same as before with hackneyed manipulations filling time until the inevitable and increasingly clichéd ending.

● 1/2 Frederick C. Szebin

TRUCKS

Director: Chris Thomson. Teleplay: Brian Taggart, from the story by Stephen King. USA, 10/97. 2 hrs, w/commercials. With: Timothy Busfield, Brenda Bakke, Brendan Fletcher, Amy Stewart, Jay Brazeau.

This better-than-average King adaptation makes for an okay TV movie in which trucks are somehow imbued with intelligence enough to throw off the yolk of their drivers and trap a group of people in a diner. Busfield is the owner of the diner/gas station that is surrounded by driverless trucks, cut off from the rest of the world, and watching their numbers dwindle in failed escape plans. The short story is nicely fleshed-out and kept moving with a minimum of clichéd nonsense from the two redneck truckers trapped in the diner. Main characters get their dramatic "moments" to reveal character, but not so much time that the story finds itself stalling for lack of supernatural trucking mayhem.

King's original short story was a finely crafted little tale of horror for post-industrial society, but with no real reason for why man's 18-wheeled creations should suddenly get so uppity. This film offers only possibilities, none of them very interesting or original; mentions are made of a comet shower possibly having bombarded the machines with alien particles, or perhaps this is all the result of Project Phoenix, formerly SETI, in which all of our listening to the stars finally shows results, or maybe its just that nasty ole Area 51, not far from the secluded diner, whatever that may mean. Fact is, it doesn't matter why, only how director Thomson creates an enclosed nightmare of rampaging trucks and the former owners who now find themselves being manipulated by their machines. In that respect, TRUCKS delivers an entertaining, if not relatively ordinary TV movie thrill, quickly forgotten after the closing titles.

One comment on King's own adaptation of his story, called MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE; having not seen the film, I rented it from one video store, only to find that my VCR wouldn't play the tape. I rented another copy from a completely different store to the same effect. Coincidence? Irony? Area 51? Who cares?

●● Frederick C. Szebin

The familiar Bond themes are stirred up but not shaken

TOMORROW NEVER DIES

An MGM release from United Artists of Albert Broccoli's Eon Prods. Ltd. presentation. Produced by Michael G. Wilson & Barbara Broccoli. Director, Roger Spottiswoode. Director of photography, Robert Elswit. Editors, Dominique Fortin, Michel Arcand. Sound, Chris Munro. Production designer, Allen Cameron. Art director, Stephen Scott, Giles Masters, Tony Reading, Jonathan Lee, Ken Court. Costume designer, Lindy Hemming. Music, David Arnold. Screenplay by Bruce Feirstein. 12/97, 119 mins. PG-13.

James Bond.....	Pierce Brosnan
Elliot Carver.....	Jonathan Pryce
Wai Lin.....	Michelle Yeoh
Paris Carver.....	Teri Hatcher
Wade.....	Joe Don Baker
M.....	Judi Dench
Q.....	Desmond Llewelyn
Dr. Kaufman.....	Vincent Schiavelli

by Steve Biodrowski

The James Bond franchise has become the cinematic equivalent of those stadium-rock tours by mega-successful '60s bands: they're bigger and more elaborate than ever before, and they make tons of money from eager ticket-buyers; while critics carp about recycling past glories, new fans get to go out and see something they have previously experienced only on home media, and older fans can relive their favorite hits, performed by a new lead singer.

In this case, the "singer" is actually an actor, Pierce Brosnan, and he's not exactly new, having



Above: Brosnan's winning portrayal of Bond hasn't eclipsed Sean Connery, but it does work. Left: Jonathan Pryce is gloriously villainous as Elliot Carver.

previously appeared in *GOLDENEYE*. Still, his presence goes a long way toward making a new-sounding song out of the same old notes: the supervillain and his lethal sidekick; the woman whose death fuels Bond's personal vendetta; the female agent who teams up with 007; the banter with Money Penny; the action, the gadgets, the one-liners. Desmond Llewelyn's Q even pops up like a former bandmate who walks on stage for a one-song reunion, much to the joy of long time fans.

The film even has the ghost of an idea beneath its surface—not to lend thematic depth, but to make Bond seem relevant (not a "misogynistic dinosaur," as he was labeled last time out). The film sets up a nice subplot portraying the conflict between the military, who want to go in with guns blazing, and M

does stay on tune, thanks to performers who know how to belt out an old favorite. Brosnan and Teri Hatcher play a marvelous duet as two people whose personal past intersects the current mission, with fatal results. Michelle Yeoh, as Chinese spy Wai Lin, gets to perform only one martial arts aria, but it brings some variety to the action. And Jonathan Pryce plays Elliot Carver as if he were a villain of operatic grandeur and menace.

Bond manipulates a remote-controlled car in one of the action set-pieces of *TOMORROW NEVER DIES*.

(Judi Dench, displaying more force of personality this time), who wants to rely on the subtler methods of 007. The film seems to suggest that in a world where the nuclear stakes could lead to

mass destruction, espionage—once viewed as a dirty, underhanded business with none of the noble glory of open, armed combat—is now preferable to full-scale war.

Brosnan tries to combine the best of Sean Connery and Roger Moore in his portrayal. He plays the serious side of the character without his tongue in cheek; he wants you to feel the pain when Bond finds Paris (Hatcher) murdered. Still, he mostly lacks the lethal intensity of Connery, except in one neat scene wherein he grapples with Paris' assassin. "I'm only a professional doing a job," pleads Dr. Kaufman (Vincent Schiavelli) as Bond gets the upper hand. "So am I," seethes Bond as he pulls the trigger, and Brosnan's delivery tells us that 007, despite his words, indeed does take this quite personally. At the other end of the spectrum, Brosnan can't resist stepping out of character to be funny upon accidentally triggering one Wai Lin's lethal gadgets—his startled laughter is the equivalent of Moore's old double-takes.

Tech credits are solid. The script adds a few decorative notes to the old songs, and director Roger Spottiswoode conducts the action well, but his work is fairly impersonal. The result is a film that, although exciting, never reaches the kinetic intensity of John Woo's *FACE/OFF*. Perhaps next time the producers should hire a virtuoso who can compose some new tunes, not just variations on the established themes. □



WIND IN THE WILLOWS: director-writer-star Terry Jones on reuniting the full Monty Python crew.

By Alan Jones

Kenneth Grahame's *Toad, Ratty, Mole, and Badger* have enthralled children of all ages since the former Bank of England secretary wrote *The Wind in the Willows* in 1908. The classic book has never been out of print; the reason it sells vast quantities annually can primarily be put down to conjuring up a magical mixture of wide-eyed innocence, gung-ho optimism, Edwardian nostalgia, the universal love for animals and memories of endless, hazy summer days.

Director Terry Jones has roped in his old 'Flying Circus' colleagues Eric Idle, Michael Palin, and John Cleese for a screen reunion in the \$16 million live-action version of *THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS*. As in many of his past movies (*MONTY PYTHON'S LIFE OF BRIAN*, *MONTY PYTHON'S THE MEANING OF LIFE*, and *ERIK THE VIKING*) Jones also wrote and starred, as Toad.

Shot during the summer of 1995 at Kentwell Hall in Long Melford, Suffolk (the actual house on which Grahame based his stories), and at Shepperton Studios, the film is the winner of a race to beat a rival version of *THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS* to the screen. Although plans for an animated adaptation of Alan Bennett's lavish London stage adaptation were ultimately shelved, the award-winning spectacular did play a part in the genesis of Jones' interpretation. When originally asked if he was



Terry Jones, in his costume as Toad, directs *THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS*.

interested in *WIND IN THE WILLOWS*, he "read the script and didn't like it," he recalled. "Then I went to see Alan Bennett's version and enjoyed it immensely; I'd heard he'd written a screenplay and thought I could do something with it. But Paramount owned the rights to that, so someone suggested I should write my own. Finally, I read the Grahame book and saw all the dramatic possibilities. That original production fell through, but producer Jake Eberts called up saying he had a *WILLOWS* project going—all he needed was a script. So I got into bed with him, so to speak!"

The reason for all this renewed activity was simple: "The book came out of copyright in 1992, 60 years after the authors' death, and there was this sudden rush to use this classic of children's literature," Jones explained. "Then a strange thing happened; the EEC decided to harmonize all of European copyright laws with those in Germany, where the public domain period was 70 years. So as from July 31, 1995, *The Wind in the Willows* went back into copyright. The struggle we had to get the movie going was all because of that July deadline. In the end, to avoid any bad feeling, we decided to work with Grahame's estate anyway."

Jones was attracted to the story because "it's the finest parody ever written of the pomposity of the English middle classes." Jones nevertheless did

add extra incidents to beef up the climax: a hair-raising sequence involving a mincing machine in the Weasels' dog food factory is a case in point. "But nothing I've added detracts from the strong basic qualities the novel contains. It has warmth and is a hymn to friendship. Plus, it has a great feeling of Englishness and home—a sense of safety in the river bank burrows of a wild world." Jones added, "Most of all the characters are strong and sympathetic. Toad is a wonderfully reckless idiot. You know he's stupid and stubborn, but you can't help liking him."

Jones decided early on not to use animatronics or heavy makeup to bring Grahame's creatures to life. He remarked, "I felt that route would be a mistake. The more elaborate the makeup, the less acting the actors can do. We've been very sparing in that department. It hasn't been too bad for me as Toad. I was going to wear prosthetics on my cheeks to fatten my face up but then decided I was plump enough already! I have shaved my eyebrows off and had my hair dyed orange, but basically I just

go green. It takes about forty minutes daily to green me up. My costume is constructed as a cage; it works as a body so it doesn't look like padding."

As for the casting process, Jones said he went for "how actors are, rather than how they can be. Anthony Sher isn't weaselly in life, but he's a wonderful weasel. Eric Idle is a perfect Ratty because he's that easygoing and laid-back in reality. Nicol Williamson has this strong charisma with a hint of danger, which is perfect for Badger. And as soon as I chatted to Steve Coogan, then saw him wear the contact lenses and thick glasses, I knew he was Mole. Originally, I thought we should all study our prospective animals. But then it seemed quite obvious to me that the book is really about people, not animals. It's the toad in the people, not the people in the Toad."

In common with the Bennett stage show, Jones' film includes musical interludes. "Yes," he grinned, "there are production numbers. I hummed a few melodies into a tape recorder, and John Du Prez, our musical director, turned them into songs. We had to have them ready early for playback on the set."

The old standard "Messing about on the River" was also included for Ratty to sing. As played by Eric Idle, the role brings his career full circle. He explained, "My first dramatic performance, age 12, was in a production of 'Toad of Toad Hall'. I played Second Fieldmouse. I don't remember being this uncomfortable, though; I have to wear false ears, a wig, a seven-foot-long tail, and the most irritating whiskers in history. Even being in Terry Gilliam's *THE ADVENTURES*



Left: Mr. Toad goes on one of his wild rides. Right: Jones teams up with Steve Coogan as Mole and former Python Eric Idle as Ratty.



Walks the line between insipid and inspired

THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS

A Sony release from Columbia Pictures of an Allied Filmmakers presentation of a John Goldstone production. Director and writer, Terry Jones. Producers Goldstone & Jake Eberts. Director of photography, David Tattersall. Editor, Julian Doyle. Production and costume designer, James Acheson. Visual effects supervisor, Peter Chiang. Special effects supervisor, Peter Hutchinson. Sound, Andre Jacquernin. Music, John Du Prez, Jones, Andre Jacquernin. Based on the novel by Kenneth Grahame. 10/97, 90 mins.

Mole.....	Steve Coogan
Rat.....	Eric Idle
Toad.....	Terry Jones
Chief Weasel.....	Anthony Sher
Badger.....	Nicol Williamson
Toad's lawyer.....	John Cleese
The Sun.....	Michael Palin
Judge.....	Steven Fry
Engine Driver.....	Bernard Hill

by Alan Jones

Inspid or inspired? Director Terry Jones' affectionate adaptation of Kenneth Grahame's classic children's book is cleverly caught somewhere between those two extremes. But whatever the faults, Jones has managed to rope in his old Python buddies to add comic luster to the cast. The remaining full Monty crew are all on view in this first-class revision of the model middle-class parody which may not quite be the Holy Grail but does add further understanding to the Meaning of English Life.

Set in that dreamy Neverland known as the English Countryside, which really exists only in people's fond memories and '50s Ealing comedies, Jones's film basically hits the right tone visually and plot-wise with a zest that manages to entrance children while delighting adults with its wickedly funny minor details. Happily, Jones' screenplay does nothing startling with Grahame's much-loved characters. There are a few plot tweaks to heighten the drama in the latter

Toad's friends help him escape jail by dressing him in drag.



Writer-director-star Terry Jones presides as Toad at Toad Hall in his live-action adaptation of THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS, a charming but neglected film.

stages (e.g., the Dog Food Factory's giant mincing machine that invokes nostalgia for THE PERILS OF PAULINE), but Jones has wisely let the animal fable spin the same age-old magic it always has.

Toad (Jones), Mole (Steve Coogan), Rat (Eric Idle), and Badger (Nicol Williamson) go messing about on the river, caravan through the countryside, and motor on the Wild Wood lanes as the dastardly weasels (led by Anthony Sher) conspire to take advantage of Toad's car craze and move into the palatial Toad Hall. How Toad gets out of prison in drag to win the day for the riverbank folk has been written in stone.

Using minimal makeup and very few special effects, the actors manage to conjure up the very essence of their individual ani-

mal's natures perfectly. If Jones' green, moon-faced Toad fails to impress as much as Coogan's, Idle's, and Williamson's creature creations, it's mainly because he's the most annoying and least lovable character as written by Grahame in the first place. Michael Palin turns in a bright Sun, and John Cleese plays a caricature lawyer. The overall effect is one of a job reasonably well done by all concerned.

The tinkly sub-'70s disco-style songs are the least impressive part of the colorful enterprise. It's almost as if composer John Du Prez saw THE PIRATE MOVIE and decided to go the same Pop-lite route. However, despite this and many other reservations, there is much to enjoy: the rabbits continually making love in every available space in the background action; the leather trench-coated weasels represented as psychotic yuppies; and, best of all, the moment of pure Python-esque humour in the courtroom where Cleese, as Toad's defense attorney, battles Judge Stephen Fry.

Tricked out with low-rent CGI visuals—Rat's cheeky moustache being the major recipient—and some dialogue delivery to rival the best of Oscar Wilde, THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS is an unashamed wallow for kids who don't mind being bumpily transported back to their childhood days. This really is the sort of family film they don't make anymore, in both double-edged interpretations of that cliché phrase.



Eric Idle wore false wig, ears, and tall to suggest the rodent nature of Ratty.

OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN wasn't as bad as this!" Aside from singing, Idle also had lessons for fighting, rowing, and dancing. He said, "Our choreographer is Arlene Phillips who also put us through our paces in MEANING OF LIFE with the 'Every Sperm is Sacred' song. Her choreography for the Weasels' Wild Wood dance is superb, and Terry has directed it in short bursts with quick cuts. He's very good at this type of stuff. You can't fool kids. They know if you are faking it. Its appeal to children is self-evident to me, because the story has endured. This film has every chance of being a classic and probably the best version of Grahame's story to date."

Naturally, that was everyone's hope. But Sony Pictures Entertainment gave the film only an obligatory release in the United States, running it for one week in various cities, sans fanfare.

Jones admitted that doing the film was "a very chancy thing. It's basically a theatrical convention we are trying to put on screen. None of us knew if it was going to work in this medium or not. If anybody deserves the credit for that, it's our production designer James Acheson. He designed the fat Mr. Creosote in MEANING OF LIFE and felt he could produce a look with THE WIND IN THE WILLOWS that would pull it together; he's been instrumental in crafting the whole unifying look." □

ART HOUSE

By Dan Persons

MAGIC KINGDOMS OVERTHROWN

Realism embued with fairy tale vitality.

EVE'S BAYOU (Trimark, 11/97, 109 mins, R) deviates from Hollywood norm in so many ways that one is hard-pressed to list them all: it is a film about Southern blacks but not about poverty; a film about love but also about how such emotion can destroy as well as redeem; a film about magic but a magic so well-integrated into its culture that those who are its beneficiaries and victims accept it for the everyday given it is. It is, in short, the premiere American example of magic-realism to date and one of the best films of 1997.

Eve's Bayou is the location: a small Louisiana town overlooking a placid body of water. It's also a state of mind: that of the protagonist, Eve (Jurnee Smollett), an 11-year-old girl who's just beginning to look beyond the idyllic shores of childhood. What she sees is not reassuring: her father (Samuel L. Jackson) is the town's doctor, a man of stature, but also an irredeemable charmer and philanderer; her older sister Cisely (Meagan Good) is stubbornly devoted to the man but in ways that might not be healthy for either adult or child. Eve, meanwhile, might herself be blessed with the same powers of prognostication as her Aunt Mozell (Debbie Morgan), pow-

The stand-out entry in the **GENERAL CHAOS** anthology of adult animation is **THE SAINT INSPECTOR**, from the Bolex Brothers.



Magic realism: Jurnee Smollett (above) stars in **EVE'S BAYOU**. Right: Roz (Lynn Whitfield) controls her daughter Eve, who may have the gift of precognition.

ers that are nearly infallible but that also doom the bearer to knowledge only of the direst circumstances: children predestined to death; lovers claimed by drugs or violence.

First-time director Kasi Lemmons (who also wrote the script) builds a world at once rooted in the realism of Southern life yet imbued with the vividness of a fairy tale. The time is left deliberately vague (though it seems to be the mid-to-late-'60s); the wardrobe is crisp and elegant in ways that such materials wouldn't be in the sultry atmosphere of a bayou summer. The cast enters this fantasy realm with a rare and bracing confidence: though the child actors falter at points (they can be excused: a lot was asked of them), Jackson brings a depth and charm to his role that makes it easy to understand both the duplicity of the man and his undeniable charm. Meanwhile, Morgan, in the strongest performance, brings a tragic dimension to Aunt Mozell, a woman who foretells grim futures to those who seek her counsel, a woman who cannot escape a past in which three lovers have fallen victim to violent deaths. When she is courted by an itinerant artist (a charismatic Vondie Curtis Hall), you see the conflict in her eyes, the fear of a woman who can no longer bring herself to hope.

And miraculously, this *is* a film about hope. Lemmon, in a script that single-handedly revives the seemingly lost art of film drama, takes us to the dark heart of her fairy tale, where passions not fully understood can lead to dire consequences. She then carries us beyond that, towards genuine redemption. It's a self-contained world she builds, yet not hermetic—the secret of **EVE'S BAYOU** is not that knowledge is attained by escaping its shores but that it's there to be found, hidden in the woods and homes. One needs only the skill, and the courage, to see it.

I've been trying to figure out what exactly went wrong with **THE IMAX NUTCRACK-**

ER (IMAX, 12/97, 40 mins, unrated). Writer-director Christine Edzard is a seasoned pro who received critical acclaim for her six-hour adaptation of Dickens' **LITTLE DORRITT**—which leaves us wondering how so highly-praised an artist could come up with a film of almost epic ineptitude.

Apparently having abandoned all aptitude for narrative filmmaking, Edzard casts shockingly incompetent actors (except for Miriam Margolyes, who carries off the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy with more grace than it deserves), drapes her dream-world inhabitants in costumes that look cheesy and hamper movement, and stages the battle between the Nutcracker



and the Mouse King in a cramped, black-cyc set whose major furnishing, an oversize dining table, blocks view of most of the action. When she isn't damning the soundtrack with flat dialogue, she's torturing the screen with set-ups so lame that one begins to appreciate the other filmmakers who have managed to make shooting with the admittedly awkward IMAX 3D camera seem effortless.

At one of the lowest points, Edzard attempts a transition from a dream-world drawing-room to a low-rent Sugar Plum Palace. As the Tchaikovsky soundtrack builds to an unwarranted climax, Edzard has her camera turn in a nearly imperceptible pan, tracking young Clara (Lotte Johnson) and the Nutcracker Prince (Benjamin Hall) as they sit in a stage-set boat that's being dragged across the studio floor. This goes on for *minutes*, with naught to see save for a few, ice-frosted branches that pass in foreground. As the final credits rolled, the only thing to greet this fiasco was a sullen silence from the audience, followed by the sound of parents apologizing to their children.

I think we all by now know to approach anything labeled "Uncensored Animation" with caution. Animation is still largely the domain of the boys—boys who seem to have surrendered



Good dog, bad dog

needed portions of their socialization in order to devote their lives to the drawing board. Thus, "uncensored" can translate to an excuse to trot out a simple catalog of sophomoric obsessions: sniggering sexuality, potty jokes, graphic ultraviolence.

That said, it's reassuring to state that **GENERAL CHAOS: UNCENSORED ANIMATION** (Manga, 90 mins, unrated) succeeds far more often than it fails. There are the sops to the **BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD** crowd in this festival of animated shorts, but even those submissions are quality: **LOOKS CAN KILL** may have an anthropomorphized stripper engaging in a literalization of the title, but the animation (by the mysterious "Mr. Lawrence") exhibits a skill and appreciation for classic, cartoon stylings that makes this effort rise above its obvious punchline. Meanwhile, the fest resurrects Brandon McKinney's **PERFORMANCE ART: STARRING CHAINSAW BOB** and Eric Fogel's **MUTILATOR**—which present their explicit gore with such guileless zeal that their appearance here feels like visits from old friends.

There are only two out-and-out failures: **ATTACK OF THE HUNGRY, HUNGRY NIPPLES**, a lame attempt at non-sequiter nihilism; and **JUNKY**, about a cracker-addicted parrot—and not as clever as it thinks it is. They are outweighed by such offerings as **OH JULIE!**, Frances Lea's almost-touching stop-motion depiction of a sexual tryst; **NO MORE MR. NICE GUY**, a sharp, action-movie satire; and **SEX AND VIOLENCE**, Bill Plympton's collection of blackouts that allow the legendary animator to get back to his scabrous roots and also permit him to experiment with a more detailed animation style, to good effect. At the top of the heap stands **THE SAINT INSPECTOR**, an irreverent, stop-motion vignette in which a Buddha-like penitent undergoes the physical and psychological attentions of a robotic bureaucrat. Produced by Manga stalwarts the Bolex Brothers and directed by Mike Booth, the film features impressive character animation and a sharp, cynical attitude towards conventional notions of divinity. As the success of the Wallace and Gromit series pushes Aardman Animation towards mainstream acceptability, Bolex Brothers may well assume the mantle of purveyor of edgy, intelligent humor. □

AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN PARIS

A Buena Vista Pictures release of a Hollywood Pictures presentation. Produced by Richard Claus. Director, Anthony Waller. Director of photography, Egon Werdin. Editor, Peter R. Adam. Production designer, Matthias Kammermeier. Art director, Huck Hornsberger. Sound, Roberto Van Eyden. Visual effects art director, Peter Lloyd. Animatronic and prosthetic effects, Magicon & Crawley Creatures. Animatronics/prosthetics effects supervisor, Joachim Grueninger. Music, Wilbert Hirsch. Screenplay by Tim Burns, Tom Stern, & Waller, based on characters created by John Landis. 10/97, 98 mins. R.

Andy.....Tom Everett Scott
Serafine.....Julie Delpy
Brad.....Vince Vieluf
Chris.....Phil Buckman
Amy.....Julie Bowen

by Patricia Moir

John Landis' **AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON** may not have received a great deal of critical praise, but it has won a well-deserved place in the hearts of genre fans. The film's mix of horror, humor, and romance wasn't entirely successful, but it kept focused on the human heart of the werewolf legend, in which the curse's victim is robbed of his freedom and left with only one moral choice: to destroy himself or to continue to destroy others.

Sadly, **AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN PARIS** is little more than an inept copy of the original, minus the thematic insight. Three college buddies, on a "daredevil tour" of Europe, look for adventure and romance while collecting "points" for their conquests. Andy, slightly more serious than his companions (but still stupid enough to bungee-jump from the Eiffel Tower), saves a young woman, Serafine, from suicide and immediately falls in love with her. Unfortunately, Serafine turns out



Andy (Tom Everett Scott) finds himself face to face with an evil werewolf.

to be a member of a group of Parisian werewolves who specialize in mass murders of American tourists. One of Andy's friends is killed; the other is, for obscure reasons, taken captive, and Andy himself is bitten. But all is not lost, for the dead friend's spirit appears to inform Andy that the curse will be lifted if he can kill the werewolf who attacked him.

From this point on, **WEREWOLF IN PARIS** devolves into a muddled series of werewolf attacks and chase scenes, achieving little suspense and even less plot integrity. The suicidal Serafine promptly forgets her guilt over the deaths of her parents and sets out to save her lover and overthrow

the werewolf cabal (leaving us to wonder why she didn't do that in the first place). Andy meets, seduces and kills an American girl, then remorselessly ignores the apparition of her pleading corpse. We are given an unnecessary treatise on werewolf politics (they hate Americans) and a couple of bumbling French detectives who die without contributing anything to the plot. All this frenetic action is set to the accompaniment of an ill-chosen soundtrack which effectively obliterates any momentary subtleties of tone.

WEREWOLF IN PARIS, like Landis' film, uses state-of-the-art special effects to give us convincing monsters, and the werewolves are beautifully designed, though they are never used to their best advantage. Much of their visual impact is lost in the frantic editing, and the transformations, which might have been genuinely impressive with CGI technology, are barely glimpsed. But the film's failure to frighten is due not to technical flaws, but to an almost complete lack of dramatic interest. The story proceeds with little or no reference to grief, guilt, or moral dilemmas, leaving us with a cast of characters whose only concern is surviving until the inappropriate happy ending.

If there's anything of value in this film, it is largely due to the efforts of production designer Matthias Kammermeier, who cap-

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Andy (Scott) follows his werewolf-girlfriend Serafine (Julie Delpy) into the catacombs, where they will confront some werewolf skinheads.



BORDERLAND

By Anthony P. Montesano

ALLEN IN WONDERLAND

Woody's latest fantasy fest.

With his latest effort, **DECONSTRUCTING HARRY** (Fineline, 12/97, 95mins, R), Woody Allen has once again stepped over into the Borderland. As I mentioned in a previous column, Allen isn't shy about using fantasy elements in his otherwise non-fantasy films.

Much like **ANNIE HALL**—winner of the 1977 Oscar for Best Picture, which also gave itself to occasional moments of fantasy—**DECONSTRUCTING HARRY** is a complex mix of glimpses into the life and mind of the main character. Harry Block (played in an unapologetically refreshing manner by Allen) is a writer who has shamelessly used the private lives of those around him as fodder for his books. Unlike most of Allen's previous efforts, **DECONSTRUCTING HARRY** is an angry self-examination that lays blame for circumstances on no one else but the Allen character. This is a major step for the director whose characters embodied by him in his films have generally blamed the people (and the universe) around them for how poorly things turn out. (Remember in **ANNIE HALL** when Allen blames every argument he has with Diane Keaton on the fact that she must be having her period?)

Here, Allen's character Block is not a nice guy, and he knows it. He's obsessed with sex and hookers, cannot remain faithful in any one relationship, and uses his ex-lovers and relatives as thinly disguised characters in his books as they pass through his life. It's of little surprise when we learn that the Allen character is most comfortable when he visits Hell and chats with Satan himself. As played here by Billy Crystal with a Hugh Hefner-like grace, he and Allen have a grand time comparing notes as Allen makes his way through a Milton-inspired Hades. These two get along fabulously; they were made for each other. It seems they have much in common, but as Allen himself points out, even Satan started out in Heaven. Allen doesn't even give his own character Block that much credit.

While the film—which at times is brilliant in its depiction of Block's psyche—is in many ways classic Allen, its use of a certain



In **DECONSTRUCTING HARRY**, Woody Allen (top) plays a writer who confronts his own characters (including Demi Moore, seen with Stanley Tucci at bottom).

four-letter word and its constant references to blow jobs makes it seem more like David Mamet.

Allen's now familiar technique of using an all-star ensemble cast (Crystal, Robin Williams, Demi Moore, Elisabeth Shue, Richard Benjamin, etc.) works well here as he jumps back and forth from depicting characters in Block's books to short scenes in Block's life. The film is structured (as it were) around Block going back to his old college (which kicked him out) to receive an honor. He has alienated so many people in his life that he can't find anyone to share this moment with him. He resorts to paying a hooker to escort him, and on the way he also kidnaps his son. The whole film plays too closely to the reports of Allen's real life, which is the point here. Allen is throwing a huge spotlight on himself and those around him. And he doesn't flinch.

Another fantasy sequence in the film has the Grim Reaper arriving to collect the soul of the resident of the house and mistakenly dragging off another person who was only using the apartment for a

sex romp and was wearing the owner's monogrammed robe. Robin Williams appears as one of Allen's many alter egos in the film as a man who is literally out of focus. He's fuzzy while everyone else around him isn't. Allen himself becomes fuzzy later in the film.

When Allen finally begins to confront himself and speak with the characters he's created (much like Kurt Vonnegut in his novels), he begins to see himself from a different perspective (his own). Slowly, he finds his creative center again and finally realizes that what he's done over the years has left him morally bankrupt.

Fantasy and reality blend in **DECONSTRUCTING HARRY** in a way that allows the main character to enter himself and emerge a new man. All of Allen's career can be seen here—one might say his entire life as well. Allen blurs the line as to where reality ends and fiction begins and from there, where fantasy takes over. **DECONSTRUCTING HARRY** is a mature, albeit angst-ridden effort from Allen, one worth seeing. □

WIDE AWAKE

Director-writer: M. Night Shyamalan. Miramax, 10/97. PG. With: Denis Leary, Dana Delaney, Rosie O'Donnell, Robert Loggia, Joseph Cross.

WIDE AWAKE could have taken so many wrong turns; the fact that it didn't makes the film a marvel. This "borderland" genre film centers on fifth grader Josh (newcomer Joseph Cross) who lives much of his life with the world simply passing him by. In fact, he can't even wake up in the morning and has to be, quite literally, dragged out of bed by his parents (Delaney and Leary). All of this could have something to do with the death of Josh's grandfather (Loggia), with whom he was very close. Everyone has told Josh that his grandfather has gone on to a better place. Josh, however, can't quite get a handle on this concept. Where exactly is this better place? And so, he begins to search for God.

With such a plot, **WIDE AWAKE** could have become a stuffy, art house sleeper; instead, writer-director Shyamalan fashions the film for the main stream multiplex crowd, peppering it with moments of humor, placed just strategically enough to alleviate the film's heavier moments. (At one point, Joshua asks his wisecracking best friend, David, if he believes in God; it seems a weight question, until Dave quips in response, "We go to Catholic school! God's, like, our homework!")

In the lead role, Cross, with his incredibly expressive face, delivers a wonderful performance, a perfect mixture of maturity and child-like wonder. All of the adults also deliver solidly, especially O'Donnell, as sister Terry, Josh's understanding teacher, the only nun cool enough to wear a baseball cap with her habit.

Shyamalan displays both an ease with and a love of film (many of his well planned shots have the same texture as early Spielberg and Scorsese). By the end of the film, when Shyamalan turns one of **WIDE AWAKE**'s running sub-plots into a moment of fantasy (without giving too much away, the scene is somewhat "angelic"), the audience is willing to buy into it; as we've already been swept up in all the wondrous reality that preceded it.

●●●● Mike Lyons

Joseph Cross and Rosie O'Donnell star in the excellent borderline genre effort **WIDE AWAKE**.



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EDEN

continued from page 53

imagine anybody else having played the part."

Goldberg is proud of the final result. "I'm very very happy with it," he said. "I can't think of too much that I would do differently. It would have been nicer to have a bigger budget so we wouldn't have to do all those crazy things to get the film done that take up so much time and energy, and I would like to have been paid. I would change that, but not the film itself. It's been quite gratifying: every time there's been a Q&A afterwards, the audience stays for 75 minutes to talk. I can't believe how lucky I was to get such a great cast; everybody, except for the three leads, were locals. Everyone was a pro, an alumni of NORTHERN EXPOSURE and other work. I'm very pleased with how it turned out. There are things you look at and say, 'It could be better,' but I'm pleased with the reactions from audiences." □

LOST IN SPACE

continued from page 25

zon, was also used for the Proteus probe explosions and for all shots of the 1000-foot-high Launch Dome supposedly towering over Austin, Houston, and Dallas in the 21st-century skies. Bickerton con-

tinued, "The model Launch Dome was eight feet in diameter with Mission Control positioned in an off-set arm. We've kept it precisely as Stephen Hopkins first told us: 'Make something that towers over a city with a growth off of it.' A motion-control rig was built around the model on a rostrum because all the required shots had to be from the point-of-view of other spacecraft drifting around it before the top opens to launch the Jupiter 1."

For the Proteus probe, home to the alien spiders, and the reason why the Robinson's get LOST IN SPACE in the first place, Bickerton once more followed Hopkins' instructions. Bickerton recalled, "Stephen said, 'The Proteus is a two-mile needle in space.' He'd found a Moebius illustration he really liked—a type of glass-within-glass-within-metal look—which provided the basis for the elongated hydroponic egg-shaped dome design he wanted. We added the Gothic-style layer to the overall design. Different scales of the model were built for the Jupiter II to pass by and then play searchlight beams over the Proteus logo where the spiders lurk in the shadows."

The opening sequence in LOST IN SPACE is a three-minute James Bond-style prologue introducing the Don West character via a

STAR WARS-inspired dog-fight battle. It's this event which impresses the General so much that he assigns West to the Robinsons' space mission. Bickerton remarked, "The whole of this sequence is rendered on computer by The Magic Camera Company at Shepperton. We put actor Matt LeBlanc in a gimbel on S stage and shot him using motion control cameras. Everything else will be CGI. The close-ups will be Matt, but the long-shots will be a digitally created LeBlanc."

Of the overall result, Gresty concluded, "It looks great—gorgeous, actually. A film version of LOST IN SPACE always did have enormous potential, and I feel we've lived up to it. It's also a first for the Henson company. Can you believe we've never got around to making a science fiction space film with robots and aliens before?" □

DARK CITY

continued from page 35

trinsic to the couple as human beings will always make them fall in love—a reassuring and moving thought after nearly 100 minutes of gloom and doom. DARK CITY may not provide profound answers, but it deals seriously with a profound idea, and does it in a way that is cathartic and even up-

lifting, without being contrived or condescending. As a technical achievement, it is superb, and that technique is put in the service of telling a stylized story that would be difficult to realize any other way. □

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 This fascinating double issue features the complete, behind-the-scenes story of **DUNE's** pre-production. Our reporter shares his **DUNE** diary, which includes everyone from designers to director David Lynch. Also features a retrospect on Lynch and **ERASER-HEAD**, the cult classic that brought him to prominence. **\$13.00**



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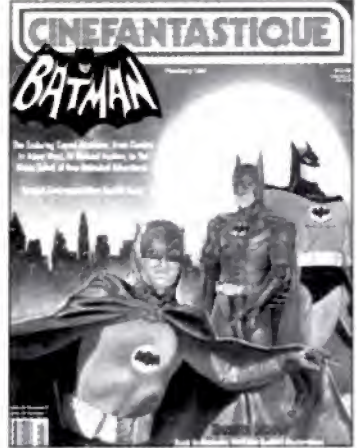
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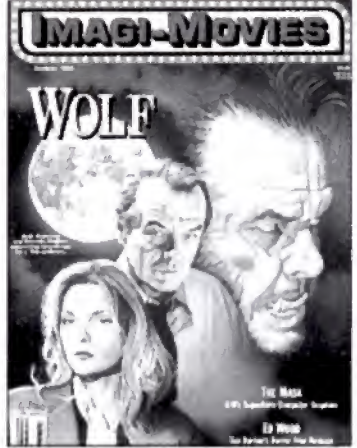
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 H.R. Giger explains his contribution to **ALIEN 3** and other projects unrelated or abandoned. Chris Elliot and **CABIN BOY** set adrift by Disney after producer Tim Burton abandoned ship. Jeffrey Combs, the actor who brought Lovecraft's Herbert Wise to life describes being a modern horror star. **\$8.00**



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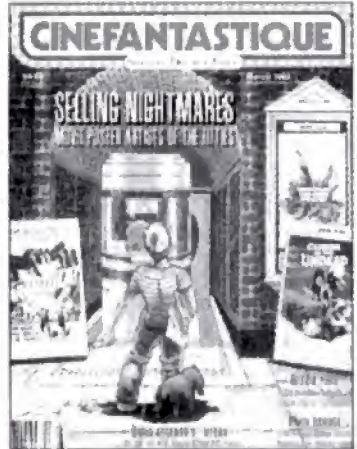
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Volume 25 Number 2 BABYLON 5 Cover
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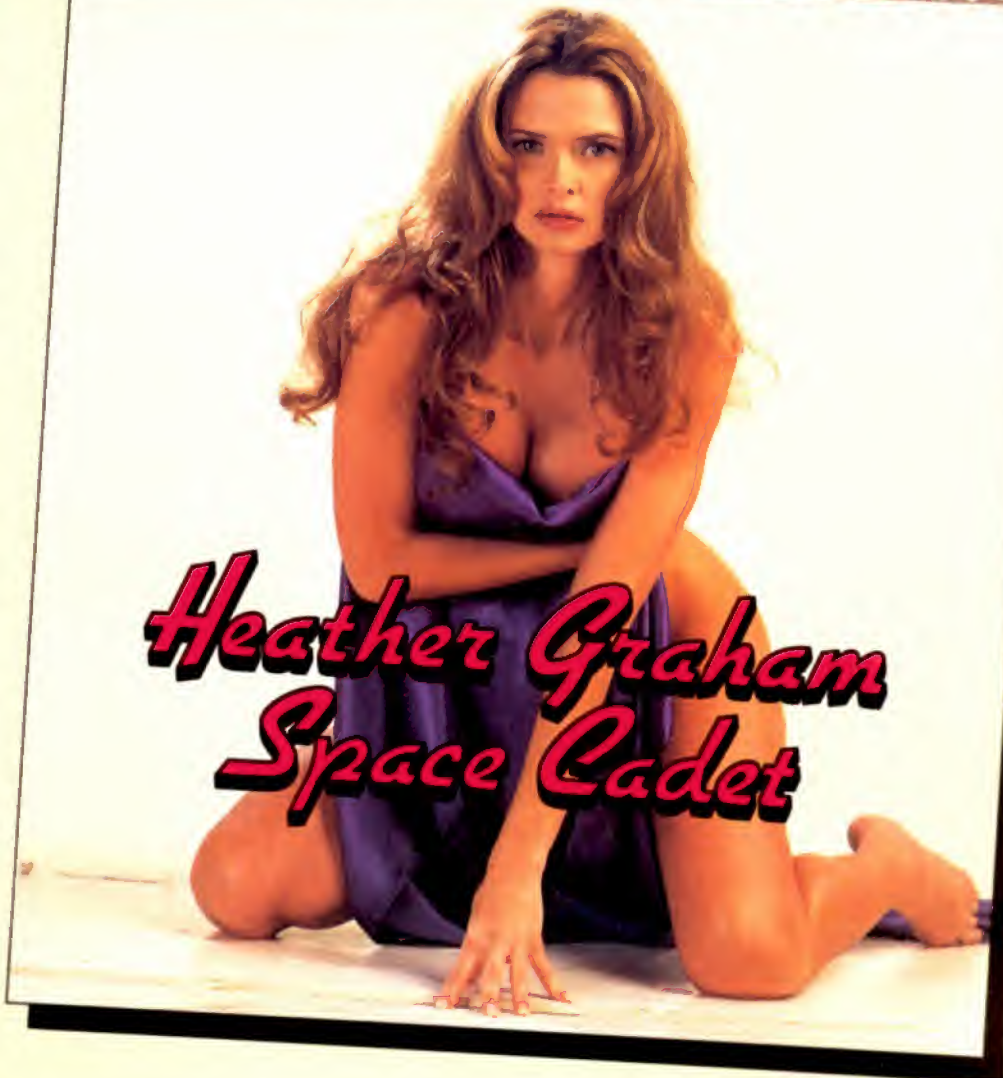
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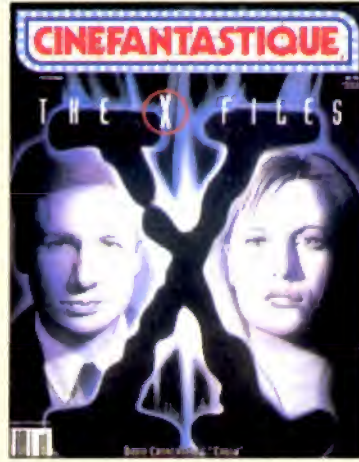
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